
National Park Service
Cultural Landscapes Inventory
2011



Sherman Circle
Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

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Inventory Summary

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory Overview:

CLI General Information:

Purpose and Goals of the CLI

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI), a comprehensive inventory of all cultural landscapes in the national park system, is one of the most ambitious initiatives of the National Park Service (NPS) Park Cultural Landscapes Program. The CLI is an evaluated inventory of all landscapes having historical significance that are listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or are otherwise managed as cultural resources through a public planning process and in which the NPS has or plans to acquire any legal interest. The CLI identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, condition, landscape characteristics, character-defining features, as well as other valuable information useful to park management. Cultural landscapes become approved CLIs when concurrence with the findings is obtained from the park superintendent and all required data fields are entered into a national database. In addition, for landscapes that are not currently listed on the National Register and/or do not have adequate documentation, concurrence is required from the State Historic Preservation Officer or the Keeper of the National Register.

The CLI, like the List of Classified Structures, assists the NPS in its efforts to fulfill the identification and management requirements associated with Section 110(a) of the National Historic Preservation Act, National Park Service Management Policies (2006), and Director's Order #28: Cultural Resource Management. Since launching the CLI nationwide, the NPS, in response to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), is required to report information that respond to NPS strategic plan accomplishments. Two GPRA goals are associated with the CLI: bringing certified cultural landscapes into good condition (Goal 1a7) and increasing the number of CLI records that have complete, accurate, and reliable information (Goal 1b2B).

Scope of the CLI

The information contained within the CLI is gathered from existing secondary sources found in park libraries and archives and at NPS regional offices and centers, as well as through on-site reconnaissance of the existing landscape. The baseline information collected provides a comprehensive look at the historical development and significance of the landscape, placing it in context of the site's overall significance. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features, and allows for an evaluation of the landscape's overall integrity and an assessment of the landscape's overall condition. The CLI also provides an illustrative site plan that indicates major features within the inventory unit. Unlike cultural landscape reports, the CLI does not provide management recommendations or treatment guidelines for the cultural landscape.

Inventory Unit Description:

The Sherman Circle cultural landscape is located in the Petworth neighborhood of northwest Washington, DC, a largely residential area bounded by Kennedy Street to the north, Georgia Avenue to the west, Rock Creek Church Road to the south, and North Capitol Street to the east. Covering approximately 3.44 acres, the cultural landscape is comprised of five small urban parks administered by the National Park Service's Rock Creek Park unit: Sherman Circle (U.S. Reservation 369), U.S. Reservation 436, U.S. Reservation 438, U.S. Reservation 447, and U.S. Reservation 448. Sherman Circle is the largest of these reservations and occupies the center of the site, with Reservation 436 to its northeast, Reservation 438 to its southwest, Reservation 447 to its northwest, and Reservation 448 to its southeast. The individual parks are defined and separated from one another by the surrounding system of interconnecting roadways.

Sherman Circle is bounded by a vehicular rotary of the same name. Illinois Avenue, Kansas Avenue, 7th Street, and Crittenden Street radiate outward from this rotary, while Decatur Street and Buchanan Street are located one block to the north and south, respectively. The four remaining reservations are triangular in shape and occupy the irregular parcels of land carved out by this streetscape. Although separate and distinct NPS holdings, all five parks are closely related to one another. Because of this shared history, the decision was made to document them as a single cultural landscape rather than as individual properties.

There is little existing National Register of Historic Places documentation within the Petworth neighborhood. The cultural landscape is not currently listed on the National Register or located within the boundaries of a property previously determined to be eligible for listing. However, this CLI determined that the site is eligible for listing on the National Register according to Significance Criterion C in the area of community planning and development.

The basis for this claim rests on the landscape's important role in carrying Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 18th-century plan of Washington, DC, beyond the city's original borders. In 1888, Congress passed legislation that implemented the L'Enfant plan throughout the District of Columbia. Prior to this time, nearly two decades of unrestrained development had led to the creation of several outlying subdivisions that did not easily link with one another or Washington's preexisting city street grid. From a planning perspective, Petworth is significant because it was the first new neighborhood whose design reflected the old city's existing streetscape. Nowhere is this association more clear than the Sherman Circle cultural landscape.

Sherman Circle and its four associated reservations first appeared on paper in 1889 as part of the original plat of Petworth. Traffic circles and their adjoining triangles are common within the old city, as L'Enfant used them to mark the major intersections of north-south streets, east-west streets, and diagonal avenues. These parcels are much rarer elsewhere within the District, and Sherman Circle is one of only two outlying traffic circles to match the size of those within the old city. As such, the Sherman Circle cultural landscape ensures that Petworth was not only the first new development modeled after the original L'Enfant City, but also the truest reiteration of its design.

Although platted in 1889, Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 were not actually created on the ground until 1923, when the city streets were finally cut through. By 1936, Sherman

Sherman Circle

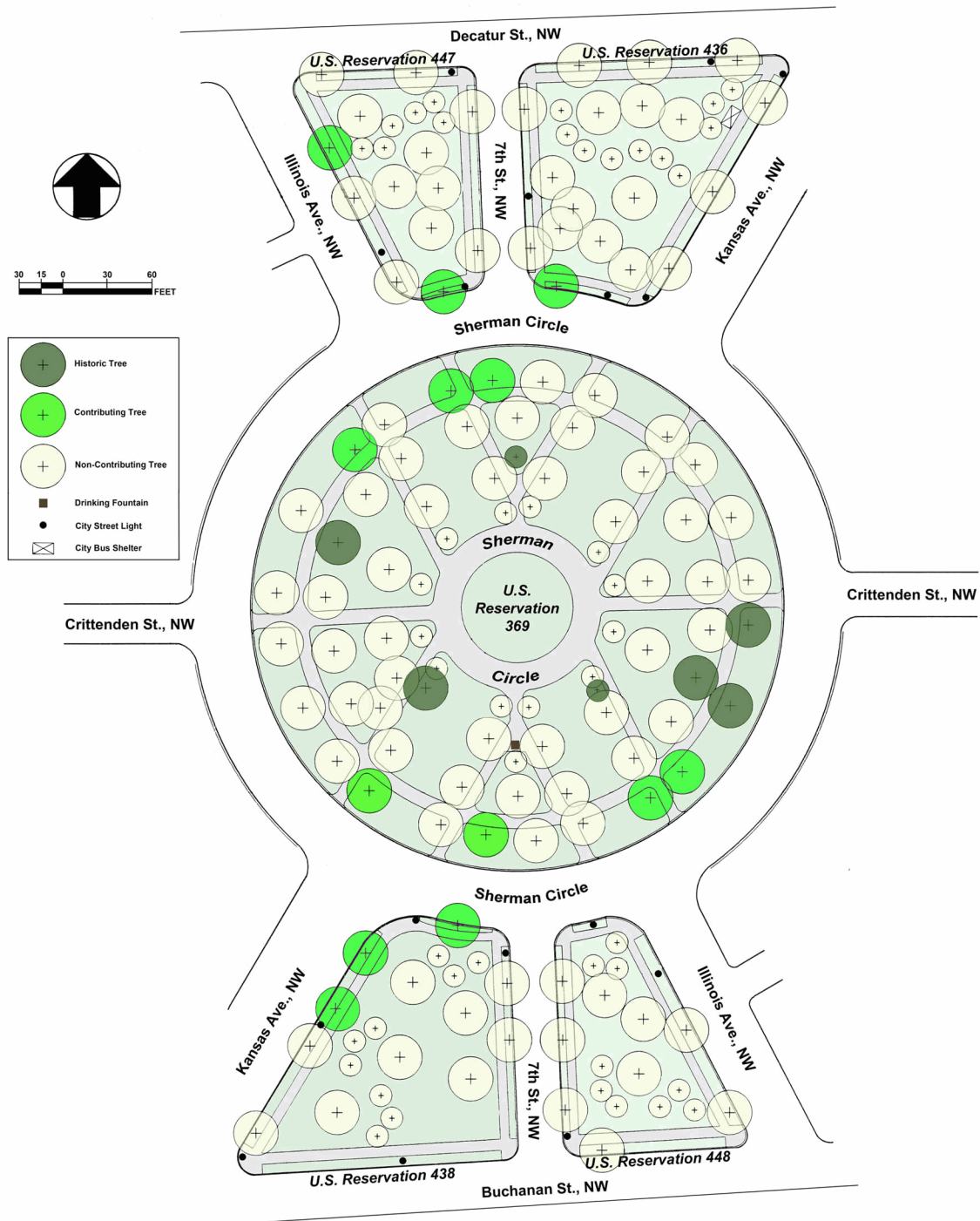
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Circle and these reservations had been developed as urban parks. The understated landscape design by Irving W. Payne called for the installation of concrete walkways and sidewalks, and the planting of trees, shrubs, grass, and perennials to reinforce the individual sites' interconnectedness and their connections to the surrounding neighborhood.

The periods of significance for the Sherman Circle cultural landscape are 1889 and 1923-1936. These dates denote the initial platting of the Petworth neighborhood and the subsequent development of the site. The period ends with the final execution of Payne's plan.

This CLI finds that the Sherman Circle cultural landscape retains integrity to the period of significance and is in good condition overall. Subsequent changes have altered the landscape, especially with regard to materials, but the site's historic character is still in evidence today and the few surviving original trees provide tangible links with the past. The cultural landscape effectively evokes the historic significance of the property and retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and feeling. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Site Plan



2011 existing conditions plan of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape (NCR CLP 2011). This plan was adapted from a 1998 National Park Service planting plan (DSC TIC 845_80026).

Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name:	Sherman Circle
Property Level:	Component Landscape
CLI Identification Number:	600165
Parent Landscape:	600163

Park Information

Park Name and Alpha Code:	Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations -ROCR
Park Organization Code:	345A
Subunit/District Name Alpha Code:	Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations - ROCR
Park Administrative Unit:	Rock Creek Park

Concurrence Status

Inventory Status: Complete

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

This CLI represents a continuation of the NPS effort to document the Washington, DC, street plan reservations. Both primary and secondary sources were consulted, and resources from both within and outside the National Park Service were utilized. Archival research was conducted in the Cultural Resource Files of the National Capital Region (NCR) and at the National Archives, Historical Society of Washington, DC, and the Washingtoniana Division of the Washington, DC, Public Library. Documentation housed at the Federal Records Center in Suitland, MD, was particularly useful in authoring the Chronology and & Physical History Section of this CLI, and all pertinent records are contained in two files:

File 1460: Sherman Circle (#369), 1925-62, Box 34, Accession No. 66A-1097, Record Group 79

File D24: Reservation 438, 1927-63, Box 34, Accession No. 66A-1097, Record Group 79

For the sake of simplicity, all references to these files within the parenthetical citations have been respectively abbreviated as 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS and D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS. In depth site investigations were conducted by the National Capital Region Cultural Landscapes Program (CLP) for the Analysis and Evaluation Section.

This report was written and researched by Jonathan W. Pliska, Landscape Historian with the Cultural Landscapes Program (CLP) of the National Capital Region (NCR). The following people provided valuable insight during the inventory process: Maureen Joseph, Regional Historical Landscape Architect, NCR CLP; Martha Temkin, NCR CLI Coordinator; Saylor Moss, Historical Landscape Architect, NCR; and Simone Monteleone, Cultural Resources Program Manager, Rock Creek Park. The aerial photograph on the cover of this report depicts the Sherman Circle cultural landscape in 2010 and was supplied by Tammy Stidham, Regional GIS Specialist, NCR.

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence: Yes

Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence: 08/29/2011

National Register Concurrence: Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination

Date of Concurrence Determination: 08/22/2011

National Register Concurrence Narrative:

The Historic Preservation Officer for the District of Columbia concurred with the findings of the Sherman Circle Cultural Landscape CLI on 8/22/2011, in accordance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. It should be noted that the Date of Eligibility Determination refers to Section 110 Concurrence and not the date of National Register Eligibility, since that is not the purview of the Cultural Landscapes Inventory.

Concurrence Graphic Information:



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

July 28, 2011

Memorandum

To: Cultural Landscapes Inventory Coordinator, National Capital Region

From: State Historic Preservation Officer, District of Columbia

Subject: Statement of Concurrence, Sherman Circle Cultural Landscape CLI

I, David Maloney, District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer, concur with the findings of the Sherman Circle Cultural Landscape CLI as per Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, submitted on August 1, 2011.

David Maloney
District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer

8/22/2011
Date

Concurrence memo signed by the SHPO on August 22, 2011

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United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

July 28, 2011
Memorandum:

To: Regional Landscape Architect, National Capital Region
From: Superintendent, Rock Creek Park
Subject: Statement of Concurrence, Sherman Circle cultural landscape

I, Tara D. Morrison, Superintendent of Rock Creek Park, concur with the findings of the Cultural Landscapes Inventory for the Sherman Circle cultural landscape, including the following specific components:

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY: SHOULD BE PRESERVED AND MAINTAINED

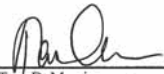
CONDITION ASSESSMENT: GOOD

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory for the Sherman Circle cultural landscape is hereby approved and accepted.


Tara D. Morrison
Superintendent, Rock Creek Park

August 29, 2011
Date

Concurrence memo signed by the park superintendent on August 29, 2011

Geographic Information & Location Map

Inventory Unit Boundary Description:

The Sherman Circle cultural landscape is located in the Petworth neighborhood of northwest Washington, DC, and is comprised of five small urban parks administered by the National Park Service's Rock Creek Park unit: Sherman Circle (Reservation 369) and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448. The site is located approximately 7/8 of a mile east of Rock Creek Park, 3.5 miles north of the White House, 1/5 of a mile west of Rock Creek Cemetery, and 2.5 south of border between the District of Columbia and Montgomery County, Maryland.

Sherman Circle has a diameter of 360 feet and contains approximately 2.34 acres of land. It is entirely bounded by a circular roadway that is also called Sherman Circle. Four roadways radiate from this

Sherman Circle

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rotary: Kansas Avenue to the northeast and southwest, Illinois Avenue to the northwest and southeast, 7th Street to the north and south, and Crittenden Street to the east and west. With the exception of Crittenden Street, all of these roadways – along with Buchanan and Decatur Streets, which respectively form the southern and northern boundaries of the entire cultural landscape – also border the circle's four associated reservations. Reservation 436, located northeast of Sherman Circle, contains 0.35 acres of land and is bounded by Decatur Street to the north, Kansas Avenue to the east, the Sherman Circle traffic rotary to the south, and 7th Street to the west. Reservation 438, located southwest of Sherman Circle, also contains 0.35 acres of land and is bordered by the Sherman Circle traffic rotary to the north, 7th Street to the east, Buchanan Street to the south, and Kansas Avenue to the west. Reservation 447, located northwest of Sherman Circle, contains 0.20 acres of land and is bounded by Decatur Street to the north, 7th Street to the east, the Sherman Circle traffic rotary to the south, and Illinois Avenue to the west. Reservation 448, located southeast of Sherman Circle, also contains 0.20 acres of land and is bounded by the Sherman Circle traffic rotary to the north, Illinois Avenue to the east, Buchanan Street to the south, and 7th Street to the west.

State and County:

State: DC

County: District of Columbia

Size (Acres): 3.44

Boundary UTMS:

Source: USGS Map 1:24,000

Boundary Source Narrative: Center point of Sherman Circle

Type of Point: Point

Datum: NAD 27

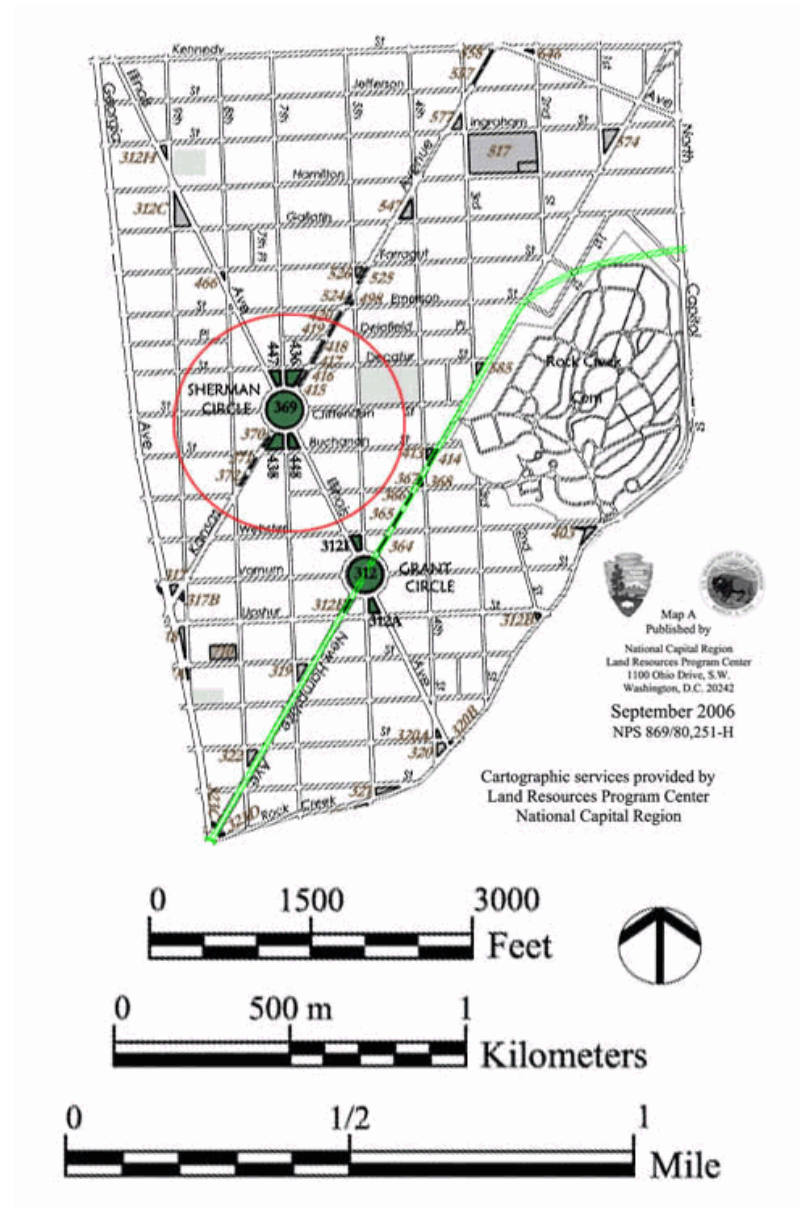
UTM Zone: 18

UTM Easting: 324,785

UTM Northing: 4,312,873

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Location Map:



Location of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape (circled in red) within the Petworth neighborhood of northwest Washington, DC

Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Should be Preserved and Maintained

Management Category Date: 08/29/2011

Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

No portion of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places or located within the boundaries of a property previously determined to be eligible for listing. However, this CLI finds that the site is eligible for listing on the National Register according to Significance Criterion C in the area of community planning and development. Furthermore, the landscape retains its historic character and integrity, and therefore warrants preservation and maintenance practices in keeping with its status as a historic place.

NPS Legal Interest:

Type of Interest: Fee Simple Reservation

Other Agency or Organization: District of Columbia Department of Transportation

Explanatory Narrative:

The National Park Service has jurisdiction over Sherman Circle and its four associated reservations, but the street trees and sidewalks around Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 are under the jurisdiction of the DC Department of Transportation.

Public Access:

Type of Access: Other Restrictions

Explanatory Narrative:

Signs posted within Sherman Circle read "Area Closed at Dark."

Adjacent Lands Information

Do Adjacent Lands Contribute? Yes

Adjacent Lands Description:

A mostly intact streetscape of brick row houses surrounds the Sherman Circle cultural landscape. Constructed by real estate developer Morris Cafritz in the late 1920s and 1930s, these buildings populated the immediate environs of the site during the period of significance and are still in place today.



A block of historic Cafritz rowhouses fronting onto Sherman Circle (NCR CLP 2011).

National Register Information

Significance Criteria: C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values

Period of Significance:

Time Period: AD 1889

Historic Context Theme: Expressing Cultural Values

Subtheme: Landscape Architecture

Facet: Urban Planning In The Nineteenth Century

Time Period: AD 1923 - 1936

Historic Context Theme: Expressing Cultural Values

Subtheme: Landscape Architecture

Facet: Urban Planning in the Twentieth Century

Area of Significance:

Area of Significance Category: Community Planning and Deve

Statement of Significance:

Sherman Circle (U.S. Reservation 369) and U.S. Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 are jointly eligible for listing on the National Register as a multiple property nomination under Criterion C in the area of Community Planning and Development. This unique five-part landscape entails a discontinuous period of significance covering the years 1889 and 1923-36. The Petworth neighborhood of northwest Washington, DC, was platted in 1889. It was the first section of the nation's capital located outside the original city limits to adopt a street system that functioned as an extension of Washington's historic core, designed by Pierre Charles L'Enfant in the late 18th century. Before this time, real estate investors had been allowed to develop their suburban settlements without any regard for the preexisting city plan. This practice not only prevented L'Enfant's arrow-straight streets and transverse avenues from being extended into the countryside, but also caused severe problems when it came time to connect the new roads with the old. In 1888, Congress finally passed an act requiring that all new development within the District conform to the general plan of the city of Washington. While this legislation effectively made the L'Enfant plan the model for the entire District, Petworth was the first subdivision platted after the law went into effect and its layout reflects the design of the old city more clearly than any subsequent development. Consequently, the platting of Petworth emerges as an important moment in the history of planning within the District of Columbia,

and the very existence of Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 stems from a strict adherence to the Congressional mandate.

All five properties are clearly delineated in the original 1889 Petworth plat, and Sherman Circle is one of only two outlying DC traffic circles designed on a scale commensurate with the large circles that populate the L'Enfant city plan. The other such circle, Grant Circle, is located three blocks to the southeast along Illinois Avenue. As with all major DC traffic circles, Sherman Circle is owned by the federal government, administered by the National Park Service (NPS), and marks the confluence of north-south running streets, east-west running streets, and diagonal avenues. This arrangement of roads also typically results in the formation of small parcels of land, triangular in shape, about the traffic circles. These tracts are common within the original borders of the city of Washington, where the majority of the major traffic circles are located, but significantly rarer elsewhere in the District. Unlike the circles themselves, not all of these triangular parcels are federal property, and Sherman Circle is the only case in the entire District where all of the small pieces of land adjacent to a traffic circle are also owned by the U.S. government. As with Sherman Circle, the NPS administers these reservations.

Although the Petworth neighborhood was platted in 1889, Sherman Circle and its four associated reservations remained purely conceptual properties for nearly 25 more years. In the interim, the area, which since colonial times had been part of various country estates, supported the tennis courts and golf courses of the Columbia Golf Club and the Washington Suburban Club. Between 1923 and 1936, the long-planned Sherman Circle landscape was acquired by the federal government, planted, and otherwise improved. Morris Cafritz, who would become one of the most successful real estate developers in Washington, DC history, began the process by cutting through the city streets and working with the U.S. government to grade, fill, and level the circle and adjacent reservations. Cafritz made Sherman Circle the centerpiece of his “Shermanor” development, and the first owners of his newly built row houses used it as a stage for holiday celebrations and community events. In 1928, federal landscape architect Irving W. Payne produced a plan for the permanent improvement of the circle. It encompassed a radial system of concrete pedestrian walkways, interconnecting grass panels, tree and shrub plantings, central decorative perennial beds, the construction of two drinking fountains, and open views down the principal roads intersecting with Sherman Circle. The NPS completed the implementation of Payne’s plan in 1936, by which time Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 had also been improved. Their treatments were all uniform and entailed perimeter concrete sidewalks and street trees around open grassy lawns.

Sherman Circle emerged as a prime example of a “passing-through” park, and its associated reservations as equally fine examples of “passing-around” parks. Both terms originated with noted landscape architect George Burnap, Irving Payne’s predecessor in the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. Such parks were, as their names indicate, designed to efficiently accommodate the large volumes of pedestrian traffic passing either through or around them. However, it was vital that they maintain their identities as parks and not be mistaken simply for traffic corridors. Their embellishments, particularly the plantings, were simple but attractive, and designed so that pedestrians could enjoy them without having to stop walking. Benches and other seats, which would encourage people to linger, were discouraged, and the parks became welcome respites for those coming and

going over the course of the day.

The 1928 plan of Sherman Circle also had an important ripple effect across Washington, DC. Prior to this time, 19th-century landscape ideals – most notably long, curving lines and other similarly romantic elements – dominated the city’s small parks and reservations. By stressing order and symmetry in his design, Payne made a sharp break with this convention, and Sherman Circle became somewhat the model for the future redevelopment of Dupont Circle and Stanton Park, two of the city’s best known urban parks.

Chronology & Physical History

Cultural Landscape Type and Use

Cultural Landscape Type:	Designed
Other Use/Function	Other Type of Use or Function
Leisure-Passive (Park)	Both Current And Historic

Current and Historic Names:

Name	Type of Name
Sherman Circle	Both Current And Historic
U.S. Reservation 369	Both Current And Historic
U.S. Reservation 436	Both Current And Historic
U.S. Reservation 438	Both Current And Historic
U.S. Reservation 447	Both Current And Historic
U.S. Reservation 448	Both Current And Historic

Chronology:

Year	Event	Annotation
AD 1772	Land Transfer	James White receives a direct grant of 536 acres of land from George III, King of Great Britain, and names the tract 'Pleasant Hill.' White's holdings include what is today the Petworth neighborhood of northwest Washington, DC (Gordon 1979: 3; Proctor 1944).

AD 1790	Planned	Congress passes the Residence Act, authorizing President Washington to select a location for the new national capital measuring ten square miles or less on the Potomac River. This site is named the District of Columbia, and is obtained from land ceded by Maryland and Virginia. The future Petworth neighborhood is situated in the District's northwest quadrant (1 Stats. 130 (1790)).
AD 1791 - 1792	Platted	The city of Washington is founded within the District of Columbia and Pierre Charles L'Enfant and Andrew Ellicott create the first city plans. The land that today comprises the Petworth neighborhood lies outside of the original city borders.
AD 1801	Established	Congress passes the District of Columbia Organic Act, which legally incorporates the District of Columbia and divides the territory into two counties: Washington County to the north and east of the Potomac River and Alexandria County to the west and south. The present-day Petworth neighborhood is located within Washington County. The cities of Alexandria, Georgetown, and Washington exist under independent charters and are therefore not considered to be a part of either county (2 Stats. 103 (1801)).
	Land Transfer	James White dies and his heirs sell his Washington County property to a Captain Balch (Gordon 1979: 3; Proctor 1944).
AD 1803	Land Transfer	Captain Balch dies in or around this year, and his heirs sell the property to Colonel John Tayloe III of Mount Airy, Virginia (Gordon 1979: 3; Proctor 1944).
	Altered	Col. Tayloe renames the tract 'Petworth,' presumably after the country estate of the same name near Sussex, England. This area of the District of Columbia has been known as Petworth ever since (Gordon 1979: 3-4).
AD 1803 - 1828	Inhabited	While in residence within the District of Columbia, Col. Tayloe splits his time between his Petworth estate and his city home, the Octagon House at the corner of 18th Street and New York Avenue, NW. During this time, the borders of Petworth extend from Rock Creek Cemetery on the west to Piney Branch Park on the east, and from Rock Creek Church Road on the south to the vicinity of Piney Branch on the north (Gordon 1979: 3, 4; Proctor 1944).

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AD 1828	Land Transfer	Col. Tayloe dies. His heirs subsequently sell off portions of the Petworth property, but at least 250 acres remains in the family (Gordon 1979: 5; Proctor 1944).
AD 1847	Land Transfer	Congress returns the city of Alexandria and Alexandria County to Virginia, leaving Washington County as the only unincorporated section of the District of Columbia (9 Stats. 35 (1847)).
AD 1855	Land Transfer	By this date, Theodore Mosher owns 186 acres of land in Petworth. His property comprises the northern section of the former Tayloe estate, and includes the present site of Sherman Circle (Boschke 1861; County of Washington Assessment Records for 1855: 39; Shannon 1924).
AD 1857	Built	By this date, Mosher has built a large house or mansion on his Petworth property. The building is located approximately two blocks north of the eventual site of Sherman Circle, at what is today the 600 Block of Delafield Place, NW. This house and its outbuildings remain the only structures in the area until the early 20th century (Baist 1903: 25; Baist 1915: 18; Boschke 1861; County of Washington Assessment Records for 1855: 39).
AD 1868	Land Transfer	By this date, Marshall Brown, the second-generation proprietor of the Indian Queen Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, has acquired Theodore Mosher's 186-acre estate and mansion house (Boschke 1861; County of Washington Assessment Records for 1868: 111; Hopkins 1879; "Death of Marshall Brown" 1881: 3).
AD 1871	Established	Congress passes the second District of Columbia Organic Act, which revokes the individual charters of the cities of Georgetown and Washington, and merges them with Washington County to create a new city government for the entire District of Columbia (16 Stats. 419 (1871)).
AD 1874	Land Transfer	The tax assessment for this year records that the Marshall Brown estate contains 182 acres, meaning that four acres of land have evidently been sold off since 1868. The future site of Sherman Circle, however, remains part of his estate (County of Washington Assessment Records for 1874: 28-32).

AD 1881	Land Transfer	Marshall Brown dies. His will stipulates that his heirs sell the Petworth property (``Marshall Brown's Will'' 1882: 3).
AD 1886	Purchased/Sold	The son and daughter of the late Marshall Brown, Jesse Brown and Rosa Wallach, sell the family estate in Petworth for the sum of \$47,500. An investment group comprised of congressmen, capitalists, and businessmen that comes to be known as the ``Marshall Brown Syndicate'' is the purchaser (``Suburban Property Sold'' 1886: 1; ``Land Brings \$450,000 1909: 3).
AD 1886 - 1899	Inhabited	Although they are no longer the owners, the Brown family continues to occupy the former Marshall Brown mansion and possibly at least a portion of the grounds (``Death of Lawyer C. Orton Brown'' 1899: 2).
AD 1887	Purchased/Sold	The Marshall Brown Syndicate merges with another investment syndicate that has recently purchased 250 acres of land from the heirs of Col. Tayloe. This property is located to the south of the former Marshall Brown estate and was once part of the colonel's original Petworth estate (Hopkins 1887; Proctor 1944).
	Established	The new investment syndicate announces the establishment of the Petworth subdivision. Local newspapers describe it as a 387-acre tract comprised of the former Marshall Brown estate and some 205 acres of the recently acquired Tayloe property (Harrison 2002: 39).
AD 1888	Established	Responding to the lack of an overall plan for developing the District of Columbia beyond the original borders of the city of Washington, Congress decrees that henceforth the city street grid will be extended out to the lands that had formerly been part of Washington County (25 Stats. 451 (1888); Harrison 39).
AD 1889	Platted	The plat of the Petworth subdivision is officially recorded on January 16, 1889, and it becomes the first such property in the former Washington County to be laid out in accordance with the city's preexisting plan. A pair of traffic circles figure prominently in the design of the Petworth subdivision. These are the sister sites of Grant and Sherman Circles (Gilmore and Harrison 2003: 50).

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AD 1899 - 1909	Developed	The Brown family's occupancy of the old Marshall Brown mansion ends in 1899, and the Marshall Brown Syndicate soon rents the building out to the Columbia Golf Club for use as their clubhouse. The club also constructs a large golf course and several tennis courts on the surrounding grounds; the future site of Sherman Circle is located within this development (Columbia Country Club: 2009; ``Columbia Golf Club Incorporated`` 1899: 15; ``Death of Lawyer C. Orton Brown`` 1899: 2; ``Real Estate Market`` 1900: 15; ``Tennis at Columbia Club`` 1904: 1).
AD 1909	Abandoned	Unwilling to accept a substantial increase in their rent from the Marshall Brown Syndicate, the Columbia Golf Club abandons their Petworth location in favor of a new site in Chevy Chase (Columbia Country Club 2009; ``Columbia Golfers Meet`` 1909: 8; ``Golf Club Organized`` 1909: 4; ``New Home for Club`` 1909: 2).
AD 1913	Developed	The recently chartered Washington Suburban Club moves into the old Marshall Brown mansion and constructs a new nine-hole golf course and tennis courts on the grounds (``Open Suburban Club`` 1913: R1; ``Suburban Club Organized`` 1913: 5; ``Will Soon Open New Home`` 1913: 5).
	Damaged	The old Marshall Brown mansion is severely damaged by a fire on May 4, 1913, the same day that the Washington Suburban Club was scheduled to open (``Blaze in Clubhouse`` 1913: 12).
AD 1913 - 1923	Neglected	The Washington Suburban Club is evidently unable to recover from the fire. The grounds are apparently unused and neglected for the next decade, but the value of the land continues to increase.
AD 1923	Purchased/Sold	Real estate developer Morris Cafritz purchases the former Columbia Golf Course property. According to a later newspaper report, the site encompasses approximately 90 city blocks and includes the last remnant of the 19th-century Marshall Brown estate. The future site of Sherman Circle is also located within Cafritz's new property (``Marshall Brown Tract Sold for Subdivision`` 1923: 46; ``Morris Cafritz's Washington`` 1990: M20; ``New Northwest Tract is Named Shermanor`` 1924: R1).).

	Engineered	Cafritz extends 7th, Buchanan, Crittenden, and Decatur Streets, and Illinois and Kansas Avenues, through his new property according to the plan of the Petworth subdivision (``Real Estate Concern Extends Six Streets`` 1923: 41).
	Built	Sherman Circle and city Squares 3216 (future Reservation 436), 3141 (future Reservation 438), 3144 (future Reservation 447) and 3219 (future Reservation 448) are created as a result of these street extensions. Sherman Circle contains 2.34 acres of land, Squares 3216 and 3141 each 0.35 acres, and Squares 3144 and 3219 each 0.20 acres. As a traffic circle, Sherman Circle automatically becomes the property of the District of Columbia. Unlike the rest of Cafritz's property, it is not assigned square or lot numbers (Baist 1919: 18-19; NPS 2009: 32, 33; ``Real Estate Concern Extends Six Streets`` 1923: 41).
AD 1923 - 1926	Purchased/Sold	Sometime during this four year period, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia institute condemnation proceedings for the acquisition of city Squares 3144 (future Reservation 447) and 3219 (future Reservation 448) for park purposes. By 1926, the two parcels are the property of the District of Columbia (Office of the Surveyor of the District of Columbia 1926).
AD 1923 - 1928	Planted	Sometime during this six year period, trees are planted around the edges of city Squares 3216 (future Reservation 436), 3141 (future Reservation 438), 3144 (future Reservation 447), and 3219 (future Reservation 448). Period photographs and subsequent planting plans indicate that they are American elms. The four city Squares are also sown with grass (Hanson 1953; NCR Lands Records Files, Reservations 438, 447, and 448).
AD 1923 - 1931	Built	During this time, Cafritz builds thousands of brick row houses throughout his Petworth tract. The initial construction takes place around Sherman Circle, which Cafritz advertises as the focal point of his planned community, and radiates outward (``Homes Completed for Cafritz Firm`` 1931: R1; ``Morris Cafritz Reports Unusual Petworth Activity`` 1926: R2; ``New Northwest Tract is Named `Shermanor` 1924: R1; ``New Sherman Circle Homes`` 1924: R2).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

AD 1925	Land Transfer	Sherman Circle becomes federal property as the Commissioners of the District of Columbia transfer title to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital (OPB & PP). The circle is designated U.S. Reservation 369 (Commissioners of DC 1925: 1089; NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 369; C. O. Sherrill, Dir. OPB & PP, to DC Commissioners, Oct. 23, 1925, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1925 - 1926	Paved	The traffic rotary around Sherman Circle, also named Sherman Circle, 7th, Buchannan, Crittenden, and Decatur Streets, and Kansas and Illinois Avenues, are all paved for the first time. A curb is built around the inner edge of the rotary around this time (`\$35,636,579 is Total in District Budget Sent to Congress` 1925: 5; `District Will Soon Expend \$820,300 on City Improvements` 1925: 2; `Estimates Provide for Improvements in District Streets` 1924: 9; `Improvement Begun at Sherman Circle` 1926: R6).
AD 1926	Graded	Cafritz and the OPB & PP implement the grading, filling, and levelling of Sherman Circle (Carey H. Brown, Asst. Dir. OPB & PP to Maj. R. A. Wheeler, Asst. Engr. Comm. DC, Apr. 7, 1926, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS; DSC TIC 845_80006; `Improvement Begun at Sherman Circle` 1926: R6).
	Planned	OPB & PP Landscape Architect Irving W. Payne develops a plan for the permanent improvement of Sherman Circle. It calls for the creation of concrete pedestrian walkways, grass panels, vistas along Illinois and Kansas Avenues and Crittenden Street, tree and shrub plantings, the construction of two drinking fountains, and what appears to have been some type of decorative planting at the center of the circle. The plan, however, is not approved (DSC TIC 845_80005; DSC TIC 845_80006).
AD 1926 - 1927	Planted	Grass seed sown on Sherman Circle (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 369).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

	Purchased/Sold	The Commissioners of the District of Columbia condemn and acquire city Square 3141 (future Reservation 438) for park purposes and the parcel becomes the property of the District of Columbia. The commissioners also institute condemnation proceedings for Square 3216 (future Reservation 436), but due to insufficient funds the District of Columbia is unable to acquire that parcel (Commissioners of DC 1926: 715; NCPPC 1927: 15-16).
AD 1927	Purchased/Sold	Responding to a formal request from the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC) purchases city Lots 1, 2, and 3 within Square 3216 and adds this property to the park system managed by the OPB & PP. The purchase entails approximately 0.16 acres, which becomes federal property and is redesignated U.S. Reservation 436 (NCPPC 1927: 15-16; NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 436; ``Petworth Winner in Park Land Fight`` 1927: 2).
	Land Transfer	The Commissioners of the District of Columbia transfer title to city Square 3141 to the OPB & PP. The square becomes federal property and is redesignated U.S. Reservation 438 (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 438).
	Planted	The OPB & PP oversees the construction of five large planting beds within Sherman Circle and fills them with ``spring and summer flowering and foliage plants``. A more exact location for these plantings is not given, but they are most likely located at the center of the circle (OPB & PP 1927: 32; NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 369; ``Plans Announced to Beautify Circles`` 1927: 2).
AD 1927 - 1928	Purchased/Sold	The Commissioners of the District of Columbia acquire the remainder of city Square 3216, an 18-foot strip of land containing approximately 0.19 acres that runs along the borders of Reservation 436 (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 436).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

AD 1928	Land Transfer	The Commissioners of the District of Columbia transfer title to city Squares 3144 and 3219, and the remainder of Square 3216 to the OPB & PP. The remainder of Square 3216 is incorporated into Reservation 436, and Squares 3144 and 3219 are respectively redesignated U.S. Reservations 447 and 448. All of this land becomes federal property (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservations 436, 447, and 448).
	Planted	Around this time, Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 are sown with grass seed. American elms are also planted along the perimeters of the reservations as street trees (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservations 438, 447, and 448).
	Built	A photograph taken around this time shows a single wooden bench located within Reservation 447 directly across from Sherman Circle. All four small reservations are also planted with grass by this time (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 447).
	Paved	Around this time, poured concrete sidewalks are laid down just interior to the street trees planted along the edges of Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448. The street trees occupy narrow strips of land between the sidewalks and the streets. The bench in Reservation 447 may have been removed in order to facilitate this work.
	Planned	Irving Payne develops a second plan for the permanent improvement of Sherman Circle. This plan is similar to his 1926 plan, and retains the locations of the two drinking fountains and the vistas along Kansas and Illinois Avenues and Crittenden Street. However, the arrangements of the pedestrian walkways and grass panels are altered, and the locations and types of many of the tree and shrub plantings are changed. The new plan also includes the installation of five perennial planting beds at the center of the circle, and includes a separate attachment showing the arrangements in detail. These beds may or may not relate to the planting carried out in the previous year. Unlike its predecessor, Payne's 1928 plan is approved by Colonel U.S. Grant III, Director of the OPB & PP (DSC TIC 845_80010; DSC TIC 845_80011).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

	Built	Signs are installed in or near Sherman Circle directing people to keep off the grass and prohibiting ball playing (M. H. Parsons, Chief of OPB & PP Protection Div., to Col. Grant, May 26, 1928, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1929	Altered	Payne alters his 1928 plan for Sherman Circle according to comments received from the Park Committee of the OPB & PP. Because the recommendations are added to the preexisting plan without differentiation between the old work and the new, the scope and content of these alterations is unknown (DSC TIC 845_80010).
	Paved	The concrete pedestrian walks within Sherman Circle are under construction by spring (DSC TIC 845_80013; Daniel E. Garges, Sec. to DC Comms., to Dir. Of the OPB & PP, Apr. 12, 1929, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1930	Planted	The OPB & PP reports that Sherman Circle is ``newly improved`` and ``planted for the first time with trees, shrubs, roses, and flower beds.`` This work is presumably carried out according to Payne's approved plan, as amended in 1929 (OBP & PP 1930: 39).
	Planted	A temporary Community Christmas Tree is set up in Sherman Circle for the use and enjoyment of the neighborhood residents. Ceremonies are held here during the holiday season (OPB & PP 1930: 56).
AD 1932	Damaged	A 48-inch water main is installed through Sherman Circle, causing unspecified but significant damage to the landscape features (E. N. Chsiolm, Jr., Acting Dir. OPB & PP, to Maj. Gotwals, Aug. 30, 1932, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1932 - 1934	Damaged	Sherman Circle suffers minor damage from inappropriate public use and an automobile accident (Residents of Sherman Circle to Col. Grant, Sept. 24, 1932, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS; Pvt. V. W. Cleary to Capt. P. J. Carroll, U.S. Park Police, Feb. 19, 1934).
AD 1933	Land Transfer	The OPB & PP is abolished by Executive Order, and its functions and responsibilities are transferred to the new Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations. The new office also takes possession of all federal property formerly administered by the OPB & PP, including Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 (Dowd 1992: 77).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

AD 1934	Land Transfer	The Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations is redesignated as the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS assumes the functions, responsibilities, and administration of all federal lands formerly managed by the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, including Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 (Heine 1953: 36).
AD 1934 - 1936	Restored	Sherman Circle is restored according to Payne's 1928 landscape plan (Frank T. Gartside, Asst. Supt. NCP, to DC Comms., Oct. 29, 1934; C. Marshall Finnan, Supt. NCP, to C. G. Taylor, Dec. 1, 1936; F. F. Gillen, Construction Chief NCP, to Finnan, Dec. 11, 1936; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1936	Altered	Payne's 1928 plan for Sherman Circle is once again revised, and as with the 1929 alterations, the new modifications are not identified as such. However, it appears likely that the changes are few and intended to rectify minor discrepancies between the plan and existing conditions on the ground following the restoration. Regardless, this plan, which now includes Payne's original 1928 design and the 1929 and 1936 alterations, becomes the accepted master plan for Sherman Circle. As far as is known, the final development of the circle according to this plan is completed during the year 1936. As completed, the circle features 84 trees and 822 shrubs planted in the 20 grass panels set within the intersecting system of pedestrian walks. Additionally, an estimated total of 1,919 perennial comprise the five ornamental beds at the Center of Sherman Circle, and two drinking fountains, which resemble small stone or concrete pedestals, are located just off of the 7th Street axis. The revised plan o
	Altered	Sometime after this date, 36 park benches are installed within Sherman Circle (J. Jay Wolf to DC Dir. of Construction, June 2, 1948, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1938	Built	In March 1938, the NPS posts signs in or near Reservation 438 prohibiting ball playing. These signs are promptly destroyed by neighborhood boys and replaced twice by that June, at which point they are once again missing (Finnan to Ethel Giddings, Mar. 12, 1938; Giddings to Finnan, June 12, 1938; all correspondence in D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

AD 1940	Damaged	By this date, ``considerable damage`` has been done to the trees and shrubbery within Sherman Circle by children playing in the reservation (F. F. Gillen, Act. Supt. NCP, to George W. Potter, Pres. Petworth Citizens' Assoc., June 29, 1940, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1946	Damaged	A footpath (social trail) runs through the center planting of Sherman by this date. A citizen complains in writing that the footpath has been there ``as long as I can recall`` (R. A. Devlin to Harry Thompson, Asst. Supt. NCP, Mar. 20, 1946, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1947	Planted	The perennial planting beds at the center of Sherman Circle are replaced with a new arrangement comprised of a cluster of seven Japanese cedar trees surrounded by concentric circular hedges of glossy privet, lace shrub, and common boxwood (DSC TIC 845_80005).
AD 1948	Damaged	By June 1948, only 11 of the 36 benches installed in Sherman Circle are still extant. Ten new benches are added to offset those that have been damaged or destroyed, but four of these need to be repaired or replaced by November (Wolf to DC Dir. of Construction, June 2, 1948; Irving C. Root, Supt. NCP, to Wolf, June 11, 1948; Root to Wolf, Nov. 19, 1948; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1949	Planted	A total of 14 trees are planted ``in an irregular manner`` within Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 in order to discourage children from playing ball within these small parks (Thompson to George W. Harding, Chief Hort. and Maint. Div. NCP, June 2, 1949, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS).
AD 1952	Built	``No Ball Playing`` signs are located in Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 at this time (Thompson to Giddings, June 12, 1952, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

AD 1953	Planned	Recognizing that the 1949 plantings have failed to prevent children from playing ball in the small parks adjacent to Sherman Circle, the NPS authorizes the planting of an additional seven trees within Reservations 438 and 448. However, it is unclear whether or not these plantings actually took place. The accompanying landscape plan also shows that the 7th Street and Buchannan Street sides of the two reservations are already edged with small Norway maples, with the larger, mature American elms planted in the 1920s remaining in place along the sides fronting on Kansas and Illinois Avenues and Sherman Circle (Hanson 1953; Merel S. Sager, Chief Planning Div. NCP, to Chief Hort. and Maint. Div. NCP, May 22, 1953, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS).
AD 1955	Engineered	The DC Department of Sanitary Engineering drills a test boring in the southwest quadrant of Sherman Circle as part of the upcoming extension of the East Piney Branch Trunk Sewer (Roy L. Orndorff, Supt. DC Office of Planning, Design and Engineering, to Edward J. Kelly, Supt. National Capital Parks, Apr. 1, 1955; Thompson to Orndorff, Apr. 14, 1955; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).
AD 1956	Altered	By this date, 61 of the 84 tree locations specified in the 1928 plan were still occupied with either original or replacement specimens. Additionally, four of the seven Japanese cedar trees planted at the center of Sherman Circle in 1947 are still extant (DSC TIC 845_80010; DSC TIC 845_80017).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

AD 1956 - 1960	Damaged	<p>A section of the East Piney Branch Trunk Sewer is installed through Sherman Circle, significantly damaging the circle's landscape fabric. Moreover, the southwest segment of the circle is fenced-off in order to provide an anchor point for the large hoist used in the project. The southern drinking fountain within Sherman Circle is temporarily disconnected in conjunction with this work. Reservations 438 and 448 are closed to the public and used as temporary storage sites for construction materials, sheds, and equipment. Reservations 436 and 447 are held in reserve as additional storage sites but it does not appear that they were ever used as such (DSC TIC 845_80018; Thompson to Orndorff, Mar. 23 and Dec. 6, 1956; J. L. McIlvaine, Underground Construction Co., to Robert C. Horn, Chief Engineer NCP, Nov. 15, 1956; Robert P. Stevens, Chief of NCP Landscape Architectural Branch, Jan. 28, 1960; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).</p>
AD 1960 - 1961	Restored	<p>Sherman Circle and Reservations 438 and 448 are at least partially restored following the completion of the East Piney Branch Trunk Sewer project. The drinking fountain within Sherman Circle is reinstalled and the walkways are repaired and replaced as needed. There is, however, some uncertainty as to whether or not all of the trees that were damaged or died as a result of the sewer project are replaced. The available government documents do not mention Reservations 436 and 447 (James C. Robertson, Supt. DC Construction and Repair Div., to T. Sutton Jett, Supt. NCP, July 25, 1961; William M. Haussman, Chief Design and Construction NCP, to Robertson, Aug. 30, 1961; Haussman to Robertson, Oct. 10, 1961; Jett to Maintenance Div. Chief NCP, Oct. 19, 1961; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).</p>
AD 1961	Removed	<p>After receiving several complaints about the improper public use of the benches within Sherman Circle, the NPS removes all of these benches (Haussman to E. Elvove, Sept. 13, 1961, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).</p>
AD 1962	Land Transfer	<p>The NPS transfers a 24-square-foot parcel of ground occupying the northwest corner of Reservation 438 to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia to allow for the construction of a new sidewalk (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 438; Jett to DC Comms., Aug. 7, 1962, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS).</p>

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

AD 1963	Altered	According to a November 1963 topographical map of Sherman Circle, at least 28 of the 84 locations that Payne reserved for specimen trees in his original 1928 plan are vacant at this time. Moreover, only one Japanese cedar tree is present at the center of the circle (DSC TIC 845_80010; DSC TIC 845_80017; DSC TIC 845_80018).
AD 1964	Planned	The NPS develops an ambitious redevelopment plan for Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448. It calls for new tree and shrub plantings within all five parks, significant alterations to the pedestrian walkways within Sherman Circle, the removal of the circle's drinking fountains and the installation of drinking fountains with Reservations 436 and 448, the installation of trash receptacles, construction of bus stop areas within the four reservations, and the construction of children's play areas and associated paving and fencing within Reservations 436 and 438. However, the plan is not approved, probably in large part because of its high cost (845_80019).
AD 1965	Damaged	Around this time, an NPS assessment of Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 concludes that the five small parks are in overall good condition, but exhibit a degree of damage. The pedestrian walks are in fairly good condition, but contain cracks and broken areas and some undesirable changes in elevation. The latter issue is most severe around the perimeter of the circle, where the walkway has sunk to such a degree as to become a tripping hazard. The surviving large trees are deemed to be in good condition, but the smaller trees, presumably replacement stock, appear "somewhat ragged." The glossy privet hedge within Sherman Circle is broken and not in good condition. A photograph accompanying the report reveals that the boxwood hedge is still in place, but the status of the lace shrubs is uncertain. The grass in all five parks is not badly worn, but bare spots exist and the recommendation is to reseed (Undated assessment and photos in NCR CLP Files, Reservations 369, 4
AD 1966	Built	By this date, two signs reading No Ball Playing are installed within Sherman Circle, and one each within Reservations 436, 438, and 447. This is the last known reference to such signs within the landscape (DSC TIC 845_80023).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

AD 1984	Altered	All of the concrete pedestrian walkways within Sherman Circle are taken up and replaced (Fleming 1984).
	Land Transfer	By this date, Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 are placed under the jurisdiction of Rock Creek Park within the NCR of the NPS (Fleming 1984).
AD 1985	Altered	By this date, only six of the 84 trees specified in the 1928 plan of Sherman Circle are still extant, a 93 percent mortality rate. An additional 13 replacement trees are in place, but 65 of the 84 tree locations lack plantings. Both of the original pedestal drinking fountains have also been removed, but the southern has been replaced with the current NPS drinking fountain. Its installation evidently involves a slight alteration to the underlying concrete walkway (DSC TIC 845_80018; DSC TIC 845_80025; NPS ``Evaluation of Planting of 1928`` n.d.).
	Built	By this date, a city bus shelter is installed in the northeast corner of Reservation 436 along Kansas Avenue (DSC TIC 845_80025).
AD 1985 - 1987	Planted	The NPS develops and implements a planting plan for Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448. The work in Sherman Circle approximates the character of the 1928 plan, but is not an exact restoration as different species are used and fewer trees are planted (DSC TIC 845_80025; ``Estimated Cost of Plant Materials: Sherman Circle`` 1985).
AD 1998	Planted	The NPS plants a circular bed of 165 orange sunblaze roses surrounded by a strip of sunny border blue veronicas at the center of Sherman Circle. Steel landscape edging is installed around the edge of the veronica (DSC TIC 845_80026).
AD 2004	Planted	The Washington, DC, non-profit Casey Trees plants two disease-tolerant American elm cultivars as street trees along the east side of Kansas Avenue within Reservation 438 (Casey Trees 2011).
AD 2005	Removed	The circular bed of roses and veronicas at the center of Sherman Circle has been removed by this date (NCR aerial photo 2005).

Sherman Circle

Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

AD 2009	Planted	Casey Trees and the NPS coordinate a one day planting event wherein volunteers plant a total of 29 trees across Sherman Circle and its four adjacent reservations. The overall planting plan for Sherman Circle laid down in the 1980s remains intact (Casey Trees 2011).
AD 2009 - 2010	Damaged	A winter storm breaks a lower limb off of a large American elm inside Sherman Circle, one of only a handful of original trees remaining from the historic 1928 design of the circle (Herwig 2011).

Physical History:

Early History of the Sherman Circle Site: 1772-1888

European acquisition of land in the area around Sherman Circle began in 1772, when James White received a direct grant of 536 acres from King George III of Great Britain. White, who shortly thereafter sided with the colonies in the American Revolution and became an officer in the Continental Army, named the tract “Pleasant Hill.” After his death in 1801, White’s heirs sold his holdings to Captain Balch, who died around 1803. At this time, Colonel John Tayloe III of Mount Airy, Virginia, purchased some or all of the property and renamed it “Petworth,” presumably after the country seat and earldom located near Sussex, England (Gordon 1979: 3-4; Proctor 1944). The famous landscape gardener Lancelot “Capability” Brown had laid out the British estate’s grounds according to his naturalistic design principles in the 1750s, and it remains one of the most highly regarded examples of this aesthetic still in existence anywhere in the world (National Trust 2011). The fact that Tayloe, a member of one of the oldest and wealthiest families in the fledgling United States, co-opted the title of Petworth suggests that he might have been planning something equally grand for his new tract of land. At the least, Tayloe supplied the name that continues to define this section of present-day Washington, DC.

By the time Tayloe purchased the Petworth estate, the land that it comprised had already been incorporated into the District of Columbia. In 1790, Congress passed the Residence Act, which empowered President Washington to select “a district of territory, not exceeding ten miles square,” along the Potomac River as the site of the new national capital (1 Stats. 130 (1790)). By 1792, Pierre Charles L’Enfant and Andrew Ellicott had completed the accepted plan of the original city of Washington, which occupied only a small portion of the District overall. Anchored by the future sites of the U.S. Capitol and the White House, this plan was a tour de force of city planning: a street grid comprised of intersecting north-south and east-west running streets overlaid with grand diagonal avenues that incorporated traffic circles, squares, and numerous other small parcels reserved for the development of urban parks and memorial spaces. The District of Columbia Organic Act of 1801 divided into two counties the remaining land that fell outside the city limits but was within the District: Washington County to the north and east of the Potomac River and Alexandria County to the west and south (2 Stats. 103 (1801)). Petworth, and the future site of Sherman Circle, thus became part of Washington County, and would remain so until the L’Enfant city, Washington County, and Georgetown were unified under a new city government for the entire District of Columbia in 1871 (16 Stats. 419 (1871)).

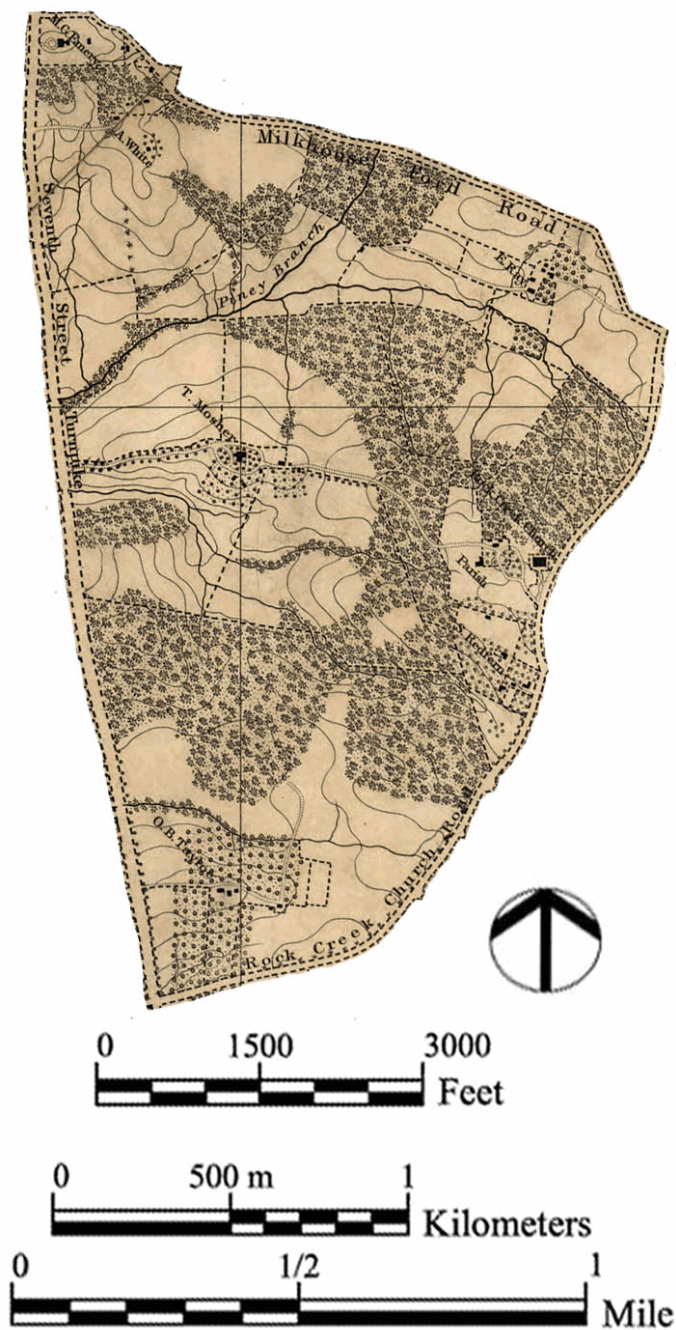
During Tayloe’s lifetime, the boundaries of Petworth are believed to have extended from Rock Creek Cemetery in the east to Piney Branch Park in the west, and from Rock Creek Church Road in the south to the vicinity of the Piney Branch watercourse in the north. Unfortunately, little else is known of his historic estate, except that the property was at least partially enclosed by a post and rail fence and that it contained a manor house and racetrack (Gordon 1979: 3, 4; Proctor 1944). The former was probably located at the southern end of the estate, nearly a mile removed from the future site of Sherman Circle (Boschke 1861). Tayloe evidently split his time between this country residence and his city home, the Octagon House, located at the corner of 18th Street and New York Avenue, NW.

Colonel Tayloe died in 1828 and his heirs subsequently sold off portions of the Petworth estate (Gordon 1979: 5; Proctor 1944). By 1855, Theodore Mosher owned 186 acres of land that had previously comprised the northern portion of Tayloe's holdings and encompassed the future site of Sherman Circle (Boschke 1861). In 1856-57, he improved this property by erecting a large house that occupied a portion of what is today the 600 Block of Delafield Place, NW, two blocks northwest of the eventual site of Sherman Circle. The mansion, along with its associated outbuildings, remained the only structures in the immediate vicinity until the 20th century. Little else is known of Mosher, except that he also owned property in Georgetown and married Mary Brent, the granddaughter of Robert Brent, the first mayor of the city of Washington (Martin and Metcalf 1976: 1,902; Morgan 1899: 237).

Mosher evidently retained his Washington County property until at least the early 1860s, but by 1868 the property was owned by Marshall Brown, a leading Washington citizen, philanthropist, and the second-generation proprietor of the Indian Queen Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue. He lived in and possibly enlarged the Mosher house, and by 1874 Brown had sold off a small portion of his land, leaving him with approximately 183 acres (Boschke 1861; County of Washington Assessment Records for 1868: 111; County of Washington Assessment Records for 1874: 28-32; Hopkins 1879: 82-83; "Land Brings \$450,000" 1909: 3). Brown died in 1881, and his will directed his heirs to sell the estate ("Death of Marshall Brown" 1881: 3; "Marshall Brown's Will" 1882: 3). Five years later, Brown's son and daughter complied with their late father's wishes and sold the property to a real estate investment consortium for the sum of \$47,500 ("Suburban Property Sold" 1886: 1). During 1887-88, this group, which came to be known as the "Marshall Brown Syndicate," legally merged with another syndicate that had recently purchased the remainder of the Tayloe family's holdings to form a new Petworth tract that encompassed a total of 387 acres (EHT Traceries 2009: 16; Gordon 1979: 5; Gilmore and Harrison 2003: 49; Harrison 2002: 39; Proctor 1944). The size and location of this property, which would soon be platted and then subdivided into squares and lots, continues to define the boundaries of the present-day Petworth neighborhood of northwest Washington, DC.



Plan of the original city of Washington within the District of Columbia, engraved by W. & D. Lizars, ca. 1819. The blue star marks the approximate location of the future Sherman Circle cultural landscape (LOC, Geo. & Maps Div.).



Detail from an 1861 DC map by surveyor Albert Boschke, showing the approximate boundaries of the present-day Petworth neighborhood. The future site of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape was then part of Theodore Mosher's estate (LOC, Geo. & Maps Div.).



Detail from an 1884 DC map by Cpt. F.V. Greene, showing the approximate boundaries of the present-day Petworth neighborhood. The future site of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape was then part of the Marshall Brown estate (NOAA Historic Maps & Charts).

The Growth and Expansion of Washington, DC, to the Year 1888

The investors that made up the Marshall Brown Syndicate included a plethora of businessmen and capitalists, the famous vaudevillian actor Nat Goodwin, and several U.S. congressmen. Likely the most notable participant overall was James McMillan, the powerful U.S. Senator from Michigan. McMillan would go on to chair the Senate Park Improvement Commission of the District of Columbia, which laid the groundwork for the 20th-century revitalization of the national capital (“Land ‘Graft’ Case in Supreme Court” 1914: 10). The involvement of the congressmen in general, and McMillan in particular, is striking. These men were in the unique position, as part-time Washington residents and federal legislators, to witness firsthand the booming success of real estate ventures in the District and also dictate the terms that the developers were required to follow.

By the early 1870s, land speculation in the District of Columbia was a highly profitable business. L’Enfant had designed the city of Washington to accommodate a population of a half-million people. Although this figure would not be realized until the 1930s, a massive influx of residents between the years 1860 and 1870 brought the city’s population up to 109,000, a staggering increase given that there were only 61,000 inhabitants prior to this time. A large number of new arrivals in such a short span caused a spike in the value of land within the boundaries of the original city, and people began to look northward toward the District’s outlying farms and country estates for cheaper real estate. Moreover, the city was located on low-lying, marshy ground that fueled malaria and yellow fever scares, and exacerbated the effects of the hot summer sun and oppressive humidity. The “heights” around the city were comparatively cool and comfortable, further fueling the demand to move beyond the city borders. Real estate developers readily advertised these perceived health benefits alongside the monetary savings that came with building a year-round home out in the former Washington County (EHT Tracerics 2009: 6-7). Speculators began buying out the large landowners, betting that they could turn a profit by subdividing the property into squares and lots and selling these smaller parcels off in bundles to the developers or individually to prospective homeowners. Given these realities, a high rate of return was almost guaranteed. By 1909, the 183-acre Marshall Brown estate was worth between \$420,000 and \$450,000, a nearly tenfold increase from the \$47,500 that the Marshall Brown Syndicate paid to acquire the property in 1886 (“Land Brings \$450,000 1909: 3; “Plan to Build Houses on Old Golf Course” 1909: 4).

Prior to 1888, the owners of land in the former Washington County were free to subdivide their property in whatever manner they pleased. Consequently, the layout of the new squares and lots were typically platted in order to maximize profits from upcoming land sales. Because the terrain was frequently hilly and uneven, the internal arrangement of the subdivisions often reflected local topography and typically bore no resemblance whatsoever to the grand plan of the city of Washington. Whenever it was economically advantageous to arrange the streets within a subdivision in some other way, the developers did not think twice about deviating from L’Enfant’s model. The conditions on the ground also made it difficult, and costly, to continue his arrow-straight streets and avenues into the new settlements. In response, the developers created a variety of alternate roads to link their subdivisions with the preexisting city street grid. Washington’s wide thoroughfares were also expensive to build, pave, and maintain. An even more unappealing reality to the developers, who were required to cut through the public roads within their subdivisions but received no money whatsoever for the land taken up in the process, was that the extra space required by these grand avenues could

otherwise be utilized for house lots or similarly profitable improvements. Not surprisingly, most subdivision roads were much narrower than those within the old city so as to maximize the buildable acreage (Harrison 2002: 27-29). Planners and city officials could complain all they wanted about the sizes of the roads or the layouts of the subdivisions, but the laws were, for the moment at least, on the developers' side (EHT Traceries 2009: 11).

However, during the early 1880s, "it became apparent to many in the District that unregulated growth would restrict the logic and grandeur of Washington's plan to the limits of the original city" (Harrison 2002: 37). By this time, the lack of an overall plan for the development of the District of Columbia had resulted in the creation of several "misfit subdivisions," such as Le Droit Park and Trinidad, that not only detracted from the city plan but also made it extremely difficult to connect one subdivision with the next (Harrison 2002: 29-34). According to a particularly scathing editorial printed in the *Evening Star* newspaper, these places were characterized by "a chaos of narrow and irregular streets, commencing anywhere and ending nowhere" (quoted in Harrison 2002: 37).

Amid a rising tide of speculation, politicking, and shady business practices, the members of Congress slowly began to realize that a new federal law would be required to stifle the increasingly troublesome issue of the nonconforming subdivisions. By the time the creation of the 387-acre Petworth tract was first announced in 1887, legislation had already been introduced that aimed to regulate its development and the development of all new subdivisions within the District of Columbia. After another year of political back-and-forth, the lawmakers were ready to proceed (EHT Traceries 2009: 11-15; Harrison 2002: 37-38). On August 27, 1888, Congress passed an act to regulate the platting and subdivision of all land within the District. The law specifically stated that no future subdivision plats would be accepted "unless made in conformity with the general plan of the city of Washington." The Subdivision Act, as it came to be called, also empowered the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, a group of three men that served in lieu of a mayor and reported directly to Congress, to "make and publish such general orders as may be necessary to regulate the platting and subdividing of all lands and grounds in the District of Columbia" (25 Stats. 451 (1888)). That December, the commissioners published a set of rules that established the minimum widths for new squares, lots, streets, avenues, and alleys (Harrison 2002: 39). They also declared that "whenever practicable, streets and avenues will be in exact alignment with the streets and avenues of the city of Washington, and of equal width," and further reserved the right to impose additional avenues, traffic circles, and public open spaces on any new subdivision plan (1887-88 Annual Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 257-58, quoted in EHT Traceries 2009: 16; Harrison 2002: 39).

Initial Platting and Development of the Petworth Subdivision: 1889-1923

The plat of the Petworth subdivision was officially approved on January 16, 1889, and was the first such planned development to gain the necessary approval of the DC Commissioners (Gilmore and Harrison 2003: 50). Apart from a slight derivation in the north-south streets running between the old city and new subdivision, the plan for Petworth rigidly adhered to the preexisting Washington plan. The east-west running streets were regularly spaced, and the ensuing gridiron arrangement was traversed by three bisecting diagonal avenues. Two of these major thoroughfares, Kansas and Illinois Avenues, first appeared in the Petworth plat, while

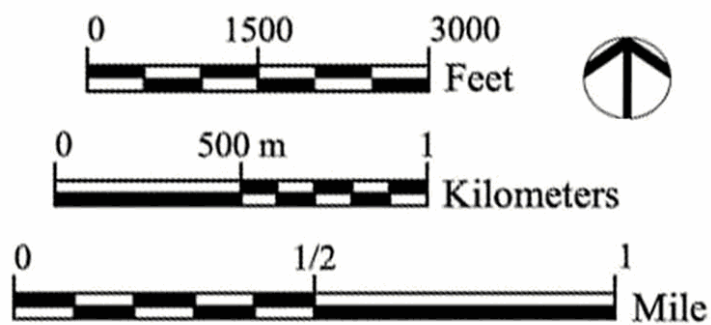
the third, New Hampshire Avenue, was extended in a straight line to the northwest from L'Enfant's federal city (EHT Tracerics 2009: 16-17; Gilmore and Harrison 2003: 49; Harrison 2002: 39). Traffic circles marked the intersections of Kansas and New Hampshire Avenues and Kansas and Illinois Avenues, and they are the only such circles located anywhere in the former Washington County to be designed and built on a scale commensurate with the large circles that populate the original L'Enfant city plan. By 1903, these locations were respectively designated as Grant and Sherman Circles, although neither had as yet actually been created on the ground (Baist 1903: 25). The naming of the circles after the two greatest generals to serve the Union during the Civil War, Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman, was most likely conceived as a means of generating interest in the new development. There was a precedent within the city of Washington for honoring military heroes with larger-than-life statues at the centers of small parks and other public reservations. It is also likely that at least some consideration was given to erecting the Grant and Sherman Memorials inside their respective circles. However, the Sherman Statue was instead installed to the south of the Treasury Building in 1904, by which time the extreme east end of the National Mall had also been selected as the future site of the Grant Memorial (Fanning 2006: 26; Goode 1974: 131).

After the adoption of its plan, Petworth seemed poised for success as a bedroom community. The investment syndicate quickly spent \$40,000 in preparing to erect residences in the southernmost section of the subdivision, which bordered the original federal city. At the time, \$200,000 seemed sufficient to develop the entire 387 acres, but the nationwide financial panic of 1893 soon derailed the group's ambitious plans. As a result, Petworth experienced no substantial development before 1900. Thereafter, progress was slow and, prior to the early 1920s, largely limited to the southern third of the subdivision (Baist 1903: 25; Baist 1907: 18; Baist 1911: 18; Baist 1915: 18; Baist 1919: 18; EHT Tracerics 2009: 17). A 1917 USGS map shows that less than half of Petworth's planned streetscape had actually been cut through by this time. Grant Circle was present, but not Sherman Circle (USGS 1917).

Meanwhile, the future site of Sherman Circle had not received any attention from the investment syndicate. Newspaper accounts indicate that members of the Brown family continued to reside in the old Marshall Brown mansion until 1899, evidently as renters ("Death of Lawyer C. Orton Brown" 1899: 2). The Columbia Golf Club was incorporated in August of that year and shortly thereafter leased out the entire 183-acre Marshall Brown tract for the sum of \$500 per year. The mansion became the club headquarters and much of the surrounding grounds were soon taken up by an expansive golf course and several tennis courts (Columbia Country Club: 2009; "Columbia Golf Club Incorporated" 1899: 15; "Columbia Golfers Meet" 1909: 8; "Tennis at Columbia Club" 1904: 1). Given the location of the mansion, the future site of Sherman Circle was almost certainly taken in by one of these features. The club proved a success and its members won a number of local and national competitions. President William Howard Taft, an avid golfer, even came out to use the links from time to time ("Taft is Invited by Church" 1909: 5). However, in 1909 the syndicate sought to increase the property's yearly rent to \$2,500 ("Columbia Golfers Meet" 1909: 8). In response, the club reformed as the Columbia Country Club and moved to a new location in Chevy Chase, Maryland, where it remains today (Columbia Country Club 2009; "Golf Club Organized" 1909: 4; "New Home for Club" 1909: 2). The Petworth tract was vacant until

1913, when the newly chartered Washington Suburban Club took out a lease on the property and installed a new nine-hole golf course and tennis courts (“Open Suburban Club” 1913: R1; “Suburban Club Organized” 1913: 5; “Will Soon Open New Home” 1913: 5). The Suburban Club also remodeled the Marshall Brown mansion, but a fire severely damaged the building on May 4, 1913, one day before the club was scheduled to open its doors (“Blaze in Clubhouse” 1913: 12). The organization was evidently unable to recover from the calamity, and as far as is known, the 183-acre Marshall Brown tract remained vacant and unused for the better part of the next decade.

The value of the land, however, steadily rose as the development of the Petworth subdivision continued. In May 1921, the syndicate successfully auctioned off a large number of lots in the western part of the old Marshall Brown tract. Bounded by Georgia Avenue and 8th, 9th, Buchanan, Crittenden, and Decatur Streets, this property was only a block removed from the future site of Sherman Circle (“Auction of Brown Property a Success” 1921: 37). Two years later, the syndicate sold off the remainder of the Brown property to a bold but untested real estate developer named Morris Cafritz (“Marshall Brown Tract Sold for Subdivision” 1923: 46). This transaction was later reported to have entailed 160 acres (the equivalent of 90 city blocks) at the staggering price of \$700,000, making it one of the largest and most lucrative land deals in Washington history to that time. Cafritz would go on to dominate the city’s real estate market for the next three decades and make a fortune in the process. However, the roots of his success lay in Petworth. It all began with Sherman Circle and the 3,000 row houses that radiated outward from it (“Morris Cafritz’s Washington” 1990: M20; “New Northwest Tract is Named Shermanor” 1924: R1).



Detail from a 1917 USGS map, showing the location of the Washington Suburban Club and the progress of the Petworth neighborhood up to that time. The Sherman Circle cultural landscape had not yet been constructed (LOC, Geo. & Maps Div.).



Ca. 1913 photograph by the National Photo Company showing the clubhouse of the Washington Suburban Club, formerly the home of Theodore Mosher and Marshall Brown (LOC, Prints & Photos Div.).

Creation, Acquisition, Improvement, and Use of Sherman Circle: 1923-36

Cafritz began developing Petworth almost immediately. The June 3, 1923, edition of the Washington Post reported that his company was engaged in cutting through all of the major roadways, including Sherman Circle, and that this initial phase of development would be completed within 30 days. The article went on to state that the first 12 of the 36 tapestry brick row houses that Cafritz was already building around the circle would also be finished and ready for inspection within this 30-day window, and that “one large steam shovel capable of moving 500 cubic yards of earth daily, innumerable men, trucks and wagons are necessary to complete this work in the time allotted” (“Cafritz to Erect 200 New Dwellings” 1923: 45; “Real Estate Concern Extends Six Streets” 1923: 41). As a traffic circle, Sherman Circle was not assigned square or lot numbers, and upon its completion became District property by virtue of its association with the extension of the city street system. Although Cafritz was obligated to create Sherman Circle because it appeared in the official Petworth plat, he portrayed this action as a voluntary public service in the local press, and specifically called out the fact that he was building up the new circle “free of cost to the District” (“Real Estate Concern Extends Six Streets” 1923: 41). Upon its creation, Sherman Circle encompassed an area of approximately 2.34 acres (Memo to Mr. Hayward, Assoc. Super. NCR, Oct. 15, 1952, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS; NPS 2009: 29).

From the outset, Cafritz very clearly envisioned Sherman Circle as the heart of his entire development scheme. In March 1924, he dubbed the enterprise “Shermanor,” a name “taken from Sherman Circle, around which the new residential district centers, and the historic old

Marshall Brown manor house, which still occupies the crest of the property” (“New Northwest Tract is Named Shermanor” 1924: R1). It is unknown whether or not the mansion was remolded or occupied after the fire, but it too was eventually replaced by a line of characteristic Petworth row houses. Cafritz proudly advertised the first of these buildings as “facing Sherman Circle,” denoting the site as a place of interest and implying that it would be improved as a small park for the benefit of the neighborhood residents (“Facing Sherman Circle: The Best New Home Value Ever Offered” 1923: 47). By the time that Craftiz completed his development of Shermanor, around the year 1931, he was rather disingenuously promoting houses located more than three blocks away as being “adjacent” to Sherman Circle (“17 Dwellings Sold of Cafritz Group” 1931: R1).

For their part, the people that moved into the subdivision did indeed consider Sherman Circle to be a vital part of their community. By 1925, a neighborhood baseball team known as both the “Sherman Circles” and the “Sherman Circle Nine” was playing games against other local Washington, DC squads (“Avalons Take Game 14-18” 1926: 16; “Robbins Win” 1925: 4). In 1927, the annual Petworth Fourth of July festivities, which had previously been held on Grant Circle, were moved to Sherman Circle. These daylong celebrations were put on by the local Petworth Citizens’ Association and featured speeches, band concerts, parades, flag raisings, sports competitions, costume contests, fireworks, and even a 21-gun salute (“Blasts Herald Noisy Capital July 4th Fete” 1929: 1; “Capital Observes Nation’s Birthday in Patriotic Fetes” 1927: 1, 3; “Crowd in Petworth Applauds Patriotic Appeal on Fourth” 1930: A12; “D. C. Joins Nation in Observance of Independence Day” 1928: 1, 3; “National Capital Quietly Observes Nation’s Birth” 1929: 1, 5; OPB & PP 1928: 29; OPB & PP 1929: 42; OPB & PP 1930: 56; “Parade Marks Petworth Celebration of the Fourth” 1927: 17; “Petworth Celebrates Fourth with Carnival” 1927: 5; “Petworth Citizens Celebrate Holiday” 1930: 14; “Petworth Citizens Hold Celebration” 1930: A2; “Petworth Marks Day with Pageant of Early Patriots” 1928: 2; “The Smallest Marcher in Petworth” 1927: 17). The yearly tradition abruptly ceased after 1930, with no explanation given. It may simply have been too expensive for the neighborhood to continue organizing such an event during the Great Depression, but the citizens association did purchase a cut Christmas tree for Sherman Circle in 1930. The OPB & PP set it up as a “temporary” community Christmas tree to augment the “permanent” tree then planted south of the U.S. Treasury Building. The neighborhood residents presumably decorated it and held events there during the holiday season (H. W. Marlatt to Col. U.S. Grant III, Dir. OPB & PP, Dec. 26, 1928; Col. Grant to Marlatt, Jan. 5, 1929; Charles Henlock, Chief Horticulturist OPB & PP, to Col. Grant, Jan. 1 and 4, 1929; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS. See also OPB & PP 1930: 56).

Despite Cafritz’s penchant for using Sherman Circle as a lure to attract potential homebuyers, and the neighborhood residents’ obvious affection for the space, the physical improvement of the circle proved a slow process. Acting in accordance with a longstanding law that consigned the control of the park system of the District of Columbia to the federal government, the DC Commissioners formally transferred title of Sherman Circle to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital (hereafter abbreviated as the OPB & PP) on October 23, 1925. The circle was then designated U.S. Reservation 369 (30 Stats. 570; C. O. Sherrill, Dir. OPB & PP, to DC Commissioners, Oct. 23, 1925, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Between 1925 and 1926, the traffic rotary around Sherman Circle, also named Sherman Circle, was

paved for the first time, and a curb installed around the inner edge of the rotary. Seventh, Buchanan, Crittenden, and Decatur Streets, and Kansas and Illinois Avenues also were paved during this time (“\$35,636,579 is Total in District Budget Sent to Congress” 1925: 5; Col. W. B. Ladue, DC Engineer Comm., to Col. Grant, Sept. 28, 1927, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS; “District Will Soon Expend \$820,300 on City Improvements” 1925: 2; “Estimates Provide for Improvements in District Streets” 1924: 9; “Improvement Begun at Sherman Circle” 1926: R6). By the spring of 1926, the OPB & PP was working in conjunction with Cafritz to grade, fill, and level Sherman Circle, and it was finally sown with grass seed either later that year or early in 1927 (Carey H. Brown, Asst. Dir. OPB & PP to Maj. R. A. Wheeler, Asst. Engr. Comm. DC, Apr. 7, 1926, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS; DSC TIC 845_80006; “Improvement Begun at Sherman Circle” 1926: R6; NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 369).

The first plan for the comprehensive improvement of Sherman Circle was submitted by Irving W. Payne, Chief Landscape Architect of the OPB & PP, on January 27 1926 (DSC TIC 845_80005). Payne’s plan for Sherman Circle essentially mirrored that of Grant Circle, and entailed a radial system of pedestrian walkways that divided the reservation into a smaller central circle surrounded by 12 alternating grass panels (six wedge-shaped and six rectilinear). As depicted in this design, he called for 70 trees and 830 shrubs to be planted in the 12 panels, and a pair of drinking fountains installed to the north and south of the central circle. However, on December 1, 1927, Payne submitted a revised planting estimate that called for 90 trees but only 350 shrubs (Payne to Col. Grant, Dec. 1, 1927, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). The species composition and proposed locations of the plants in this new list is not known, but Payne presumably intended for them to be distributed across the 12 grass panels. An open treatment of low shrubs and flowers was to be planted within the central circle, so as to preserve the vista southwest down Illinois Avenue toward Grant Circle. This arrangement marked the principal distinction between the original plans for Sherman and Grant Circles, as a Cedar of Lebanon tree became the centerpiece of the latter reservation (Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Natural Features of the Public Parks, Mar. 5, 1927, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).

However, Payne’s 1926 plan for Sherman Circle was never approved. The issue involved a 12-foot wide concrete sidewalk around the circle’s perimeter (DSC TIC 845_80005). Per convention, this ring of land, which amounted to approximately 0.30 acres, was to have been transferred back to the District of Columbia prior to the laying of the sidewalk (Col. Grant to DC Comms., Dec. 22 1926, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). A similar agreement had recently been secured for Grant Circle, providing for a larger 20-foot wide sidewalk around that reservation. However, in the case of Sherman Circle the DC Commissioners refused the land transfer “on the basis that such a sidewalk will encourage pedestrians to cross the roadway promiscuously” (Col. Carey H. Brown, Engineer NCPPC, to Col. Grant, Jan. 5, 1927, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Consequently, the land transfer did not occur, the perimeter sidewalk was never built, and Payne’s original design for Sherman Circle had to be scrapped. This issue of the perimeter sidewalk also explains the disparity in size between Sherman Circle (2.34 acres) and Grant Circle (1.85 acres) (NPS 2009: 22). The difference of 0.49 acres corresponds exactly with the amount of land occupied by the sidewalk around Grant Circle, and this sidewalk remains the property of the District of Columbia.

By the close of 1926, Colonel U. S. Grant III, Director of the OPB & PP, had already received “numerous requests” from the homeowners around Sherman Circle petitioning him to do something about the reservation’s lackluster appearance (Col. Grant to DC Comms., Dec. 22 1926, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Since the commissioners’ refusal to accept the necessary land for the perimeter sidewalk had effectively killed Payne’s original plan for the circle, Grant needed a temporary solution to this problem until a new comprehensive plan could be developed. Consequently, he had five large planting beds filled with “spring and summer flowering and foliage plants” installed in the spring or early summer of 1927 (OPB & PP 1927: 32; “Plans Announced to Beautify Circles” 1927: 2). A period photograph seems to show that these beds were located at the center of circle, but no additional information concerning these plantings is known to exist (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 369).

Even without a permanent landscape improvement plan in place, the local residents were very attached to Sherman Circle and eager to protect it. To this end, the Petworth Citizens’ Association petitioned Col. Grant to increase the police presence in the area. People had taken to walking through the circle as a shortcut, and apparently the grass had begun to suffer underfoot. Children were also playing baseball there, further damaging the turf (Charles I. Stengle to Col. Grant, May 19, 1928, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). On one hand, Col. Grant shared the group’s concern that such use would inevitably result in bare or badly worn spots in the lawn. On the other hand, however, he thought the well-intentioned people were overreacting to the situation. He was extremely hesitant to interfere with children playing on park property because he considered this use to be “one of the purposes for which the land is acquired by the public” (Col. Grant to Stengle, May 28, 1928, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Nonetheless, the Park Police officer assigned to the beat was “instructed to pay more attention to this situation, and make more frequent inspections to prevent further complaint.” Col. Grant also had signs put up in or near Sherman Circle warning people to keep off the grass and prohibiting ball playing. Unfortunately, the locations of these signs were not recorded (M. H. Parsons, Chief of OPB & PP Protection Div., to Col. Grant, May 26, 1928, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Evidently they were also ignored, as policemen were still needed to break up baseball games (“Home Runs and Policemen Break Up Two Ball Games” 1929: 20).

Irving Payne submitted a new draft plan for the improvement of Sherman Circle on May 15, 1928, and Col. Grant approved the design that August (DSC TIC 845_80010). A comparison between the 1926 and 1928 plans reveals that the two designs are similar in several respects. Both feature grass panels planted with trees and shrubs arranged between an intersecting system of concrete pedestrian walkways that leads toward a smaller, central circle. Additionally, the proposed locations of the drinking fountains were retained in the 1928 plan. The differences between the two plans are likewise readily apparent. In his 1928 redesign, Payne essentially moved the perimeter sidewalk into the circle itself, continued the sidewalks along Kansas and Illinois Avenues through the circle, added another walkway along the centerline of Crittenden Street, and separated the central circle from the rest of the reservation with a raised coping and a wide paved ring that connected all of the pedestrian walks. This new circulation system increased the number of grass panels within Sherman Circle to 20. Overall, the plan is quite symmetrical, with each panel having a mirror image across the circle. For the most part, this symmetry also extends to the locations of the trees and shrubs within

the panels, although in several cases the species composition within a panel is not an exact match to that of its counterpart. Payne also called for a greater variety and quantity of trees and shrubs than he had originally done in 1926. Finally, the 1928 plan includes a second drawing sheet devoted entirely to the planting of the center circle, which showcased five perennial beds filled with flowering plants (DSC TIC 845_80011). It seems likely that this arrangement was somehow related to the five beds planted there in 1927, but as yet no evidence has been found to prove or refute this idea. All told, Payne's plan called for 2,825 individual plants: 84 trees (primarily elms), 822 shrubs, and 1,919 perennials (DSC TIC 845_80010; DSC TIC 845_80011). For a detailed breakdown of the species composition and location of these plants, please consult the Vegetation description within the Analysis and Evaluation section of this CLI.

The historic 1928 design of Sherman Circle stands out as an archetypical example of a "passing-through park." This term was coined by landscape architect George Burnap, Irving Payne's predecessor in the OPB &PP, to describe the small "park areas located at points of street divergence or termination" (Burnap 1916: 78). As the name implies, the primary purpose of a passing-through park is to move a person from one place to another as quickly and efficiently as possible, and is therefore most suited to areas of high pedestrian traffic. However, a successful design should also offer both beauty and enjoyment, if only for the brief time that it takes for a person to walk from point A to point B. Burnap summed up the relationship thusly: "The design of passing-through parks should aim for maximum accommodation by means of walks and gravel spaces without losing, however, their identity as parks. Direct cross lines, well-proportioned spaces and auxiliary ornamentation is the order of design recommended" (Burnap 1916: 80). Trees and turf are the most appropriate types of plants for this style of park, with beds of shrubbery useful in breaking up the monotony, so long as the planting scheme retains an overall regularity (Burnap 1916: 86).

By its very nature, a passing-through park is meant to be experienced on the fly. Benches and other seats are therefore discouraged, and any embellishments must be easy to discern (Burnap 1916: 82, 90). Parks of this type often include a major feature, such as a statue or fountain, as a centerpiece, since one need not fixate on it or walk right up to it in order to appreciate its presence in the landscape. Burnap favored fountains over statues because the former could be viewed equally well from all sides, and for a brief time in 1926 Sherman Circle was considered as a possible site for the re-erection of the Bartholdi Fountain, which was then in the process of being removed from its original location in front of the U.S. Capitol (Burnap 1916: 82; "Improvement Begun at Sherman Circle" 1926: R6). Burnap, however, deemed colorful flower beds to be the ideal central focal point for a passing-through park, since they could also be seen at a distance and from any angle, but did not interfere with views through the landscape (Burnap 1916: 286).

Payne's 1928 design of Sherman Circle, with its radial system of walkways, symmetrical layout, repetitive tree and shrub plantings, and central perennial beds, followed the model of a passing-through park to the letter. What's more, the implementation of the Sherman Circle plan also emerged as an early step in a widespread redevelopment campaign for the small parks of Washington, DC. In September 1928, landscape architect Conrad L. Wirth, who was then just beginning his long and successful career with the NPS, submitted an important

document to the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. His “Preliminary Report on [the] Maintenance and Operation of the Washington, D.C. Park System” helped lay the foundations for many future projects within the National Capital Parks. Wirth singled out the then-existing layouts of Dupont Circle and Stanton Park, which embraced many late-19th century Victorian landscape gardening concepts, as outmoded and old-fashioned. He considered their curved walks and numerous small open spaces to be impractical and too costly to maintain, and expressed a similar sentiment against their grandiose planting plans. In contrast, he stated that the design for Sherman Circle provided for walks that would “better serve the general pedestrian traffic” and could “be maintained very cheaply.” Wirth also believed that the planting arrangement “would be more in keeping with the grown-up trees, the general surroundings for the park and the uses to which the grounds are devoted” (Wirth 1928: 11). He therefore advocated redeveloping Dupont Circle and Stanton Park according to new plans that included many of the general design principles approved for Sherman Circle (Wirth 1928:11-12). Both of these redevelopment projects took place in the 1930s (DSC TIC 820_80012; DSC TIC 826_80020; DSC TIC 826_80027; DSC TIC 826_80051).

The 1930 annual report of the OPB & PP lists Sherman Circle as one of several “newly improved” reservations that had been “planted for the first time with trees, shrubs, roses, and flower beds” (OBP & PP 1930: 39). This work was presumably carried out according to Payne’s 1928 plan, although a handwritten notation on the document references unspecified revisions dated August 9, 1928 and March 26, 1929 (DSC TIC 845_80010). The timetable for these improvements is also unclear, but the installation of the concrete walkways was underway by the spring of 1929 (DSC TIC 845_80013; Daniel E. Garges, Sec. to DC Comms., to Dir. Of the OPB & PP, Apr. 12, 1929, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). The installation of the drinking fountains, which resembled small stone or concrete pedestals, also likely occurred around this time. Nearly a year later, Mr. C. A. Linthicum, a resident of 6 Sherman Circle, wrote the OPB & PP complaining of the poor condition of the circle. Although his letter is short on specifics, it seems most likely that the planting was either not yet finished or that some of the specimens were dead or damaged. The very next day, a team of laborers arrived on the scene and for approximately two weeks worked to correct the problems. On July 23, Mr. Linthicum wrote a letter to Col. Grant thanking him for the prompt action in “getting the park into first class shape” (C. A. Linthicum to Col. Grant, July 23, 1930, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). A week later, the OPB & PP responded by thanking Mr. Linthicum for his civic mindedness “and kind appreciation of our efforts” (F. B. Butler, Asst. Dir. OPB & PP, to Linthicum, July 30, 1930, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).

There is no further mention of Sherman Circle in the government records until July 5, 1932, when the DC Commissioners requested permission from the OPB & PP to lay a 48-inch diameter water main under the reservation (Garges to Col. Grant, July 5, 1932, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). In conjunction with this request, the commissioners submitted a plan showing the proposed route of the pipe (DSC TIC 845_80014). This plan also included the locations of all trees, shrubs, and perennial beds then present within the circle. With the exception of three missing trees – an English elm, camperdown elm, and southern magnolia – the 1932 water main plan corresponds exactly with Payne’s 1928 plan. Apparently, these trees had died or were otherwise removed in the intervening years.

The OPB & PP was reluctant to grant this request because of the high likelihood that the work would result in significant damage to the circle's landscape fabric (Major John C. Gotwals, DC Comm., to Dir. of OPB & PP, Aug. 15, 1932, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Accordingly, consent came only after the District agreed to exercise "extreme care" so as to "prevent undue damage to existing plant material, lawns, and walks"; allow the OPB & PP sufficient time to protect or move any of the affected plants; and to pay for all costs incurred in restoring Sherman Circle to its previous condition (E. N. Chsiolm, Jr., Acting Dir. OPB & PP, to Maj. Gotwals, Aug. 30, 1932, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). The water main was installed by the close of 1932, but the necessary restoration work lagged for several years.

During the interim, the OPB & PP also received a petition signed by the residents of 25 of the 36 row houses fronting Sherman Circle. They called for an immediate ban on roller skating and bicycle riding on the circle on the grounds that the wheels clacking along the walks created "a nerve racking noise of an unbelievable nature." Moreover, pedestrians were "often run into by skaters and bicycle riders, consisting of boys and girls ranging from 6 years of age to approximately 19 years." Finally, the petitioners asserted that "a very fine lot of shrubbery in the park . . . has been abused by these skaters and young men who congregate there nightly" (Residents of Sherman Circle to Col. Grant, Sept. 24, 1932, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). An inspection by the U.S. Park Police found "that some skating was being done early in the evening by very small children," but evidently turned up nothing to substantiate the more serious allegations. Nonetheless, the beat officer was instructed to monitor the situation and "prevent anything of [a] noisy or rowdy nature which could justify a legitimate complaint" (Memo to Lt. Butler, Oct. 2, 1932, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Additionally, during the evening of February 19, 1934, a driver lost control of his automobile when he hit a patch of snow and ice while entering the Sherman Circle rotary from the south. The car skidded into Sherman Circle, doing slight damage to a hedge planted along the curb (Pvt. V. W. Cleary to Capt. P. J. Carroll, U.S. Park Police, Feb. 19, 1934; Memo from F. T. Gartside, Feb. 23, 1934; Statement of D. E. Saunders, March 1, 1934; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).

The delay in fully implementing the 1928 plan at Sherman Circle may be at least partially blamed on the 1933 dissolution of the OPB & PP and the concurrent transfer of its function, duties, and administrative responsibilities for federal lands to the short-lived Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, subsequently reorganized as part of the National Park Service (NPS) on March 2, 1934 (Heine 1953: 36). On October 29, 1934, Frank T. Gartside, Assistant Superintendent of the National Capital Parks (NCP), wrote the DC Commissioners informing them of the current condition of Sherman Circle. As a result of the water main installation, the ground had settled somewhat, necessitating "repairs to the park walks, coping, lawn areas and planting beds in order to restore this area to a slightly and satisfactory condition" (Gartside to DC Comms., Oct. 29, 1934, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Asst. Supt. Gartside issued a memorandum authorizing the repair and restoration of the circle on November 21, 1934, after receiving written confirmation that the District would pay for the work under the terms of the 1932 agreement made with the OPB & PP (Lt. Col. Dan I. Sultan, DC Comm., to Gartside, Nov. 13, 1924; Gartside to Mr. Saunders and Mr. Clark, Nov. 21, 1934; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). This work was completed by December 1936, at a total cost of \$13,000, and any damage resulting from public use or the

Sherman Circle

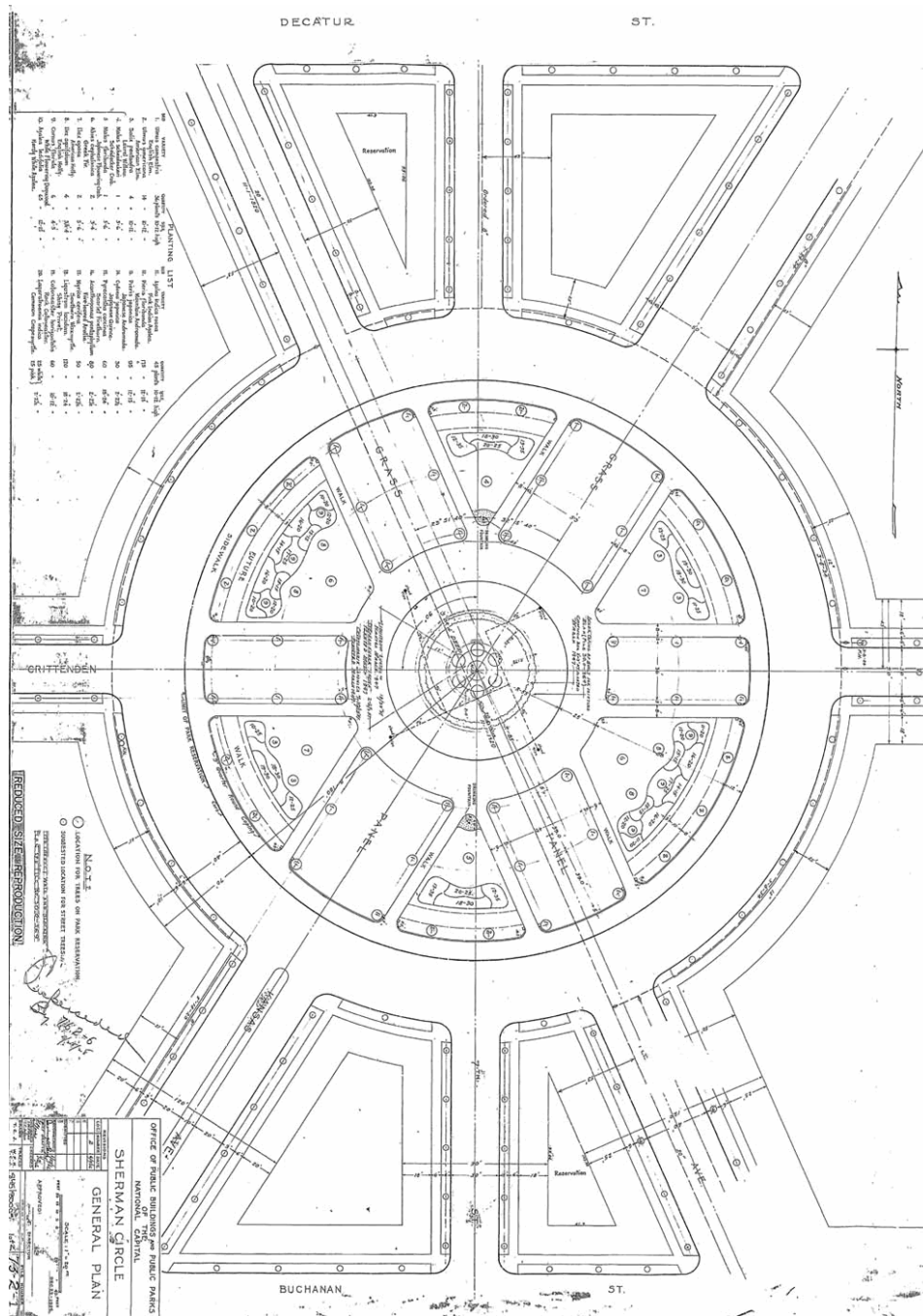
Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

minor automobile accident of February 19, 1934, is also assumed to have been corrected by this time. However, slight, undefined discrepancies evidently existed between the conditions on the ground and Payne's 1928 plan of Sherman Circle (D. W. Holton, Supt. DC Water Division, to Gartside, May 1, 1935; C. Marshall Finnan, Supt. NCP, to C. G. Taylor, Dec. 1, 1936; Finnan to Deputy Chief Engineer, Eastern Div., Branch of Engineering, Apr. 20, 1937; F. F. Gillen, Construction Chief NCP, to Finnan, Dec. 11, 1936; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). This plan was revised for the last time on December 23, 1936, presumably to bring it into accordance with the existing conditions, and the physical improvement of Sherman Circle was therefore considered complete as of this date (DSC TIC 845_80010).

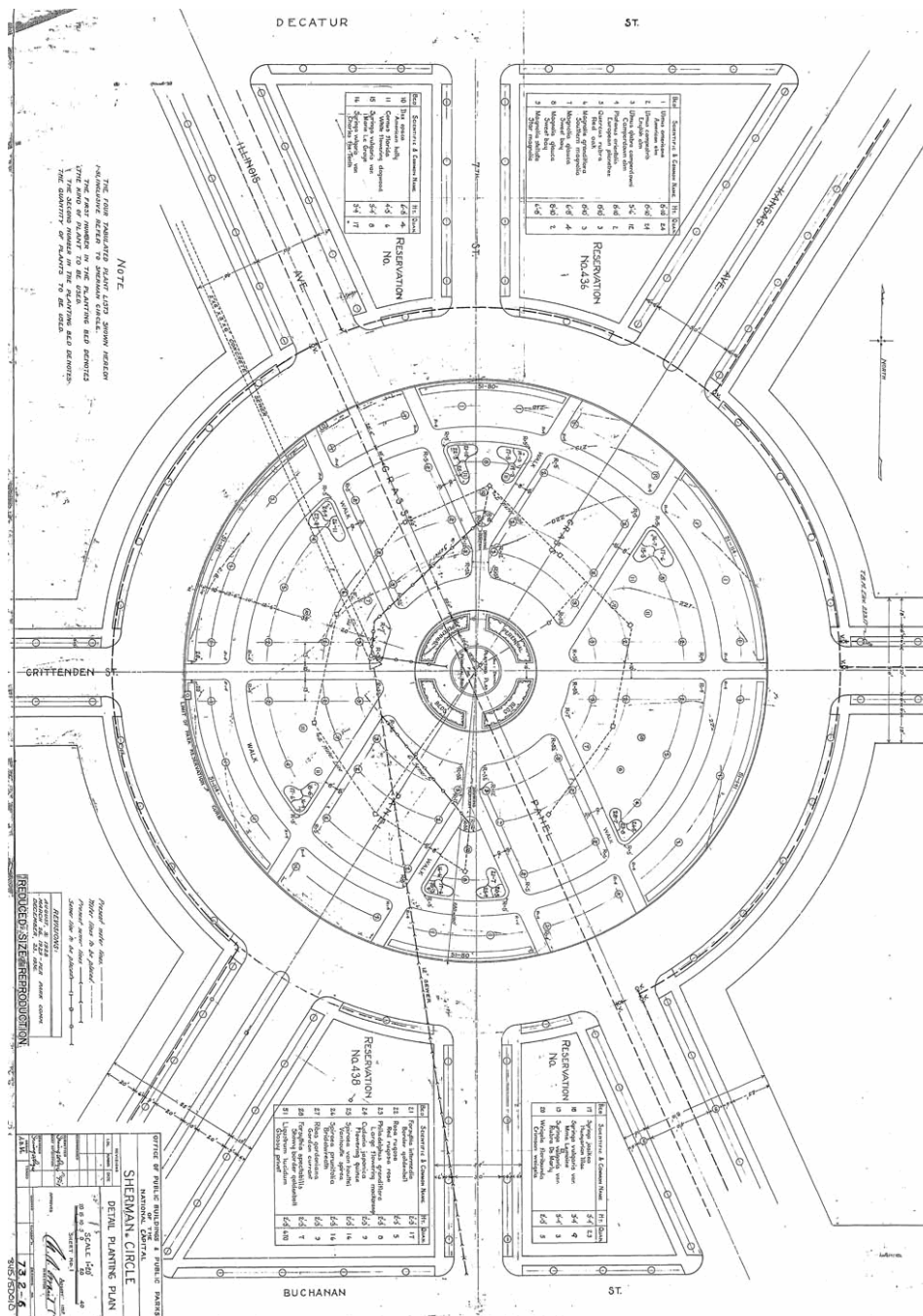


NPS photograph of Sherman Circle, looking south along Kansas Avenue previous to the implementation of Irving W. Payne's 1928 landscape plan. Photo dated December 14, 1927 (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 369).

Sherman Circle
Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

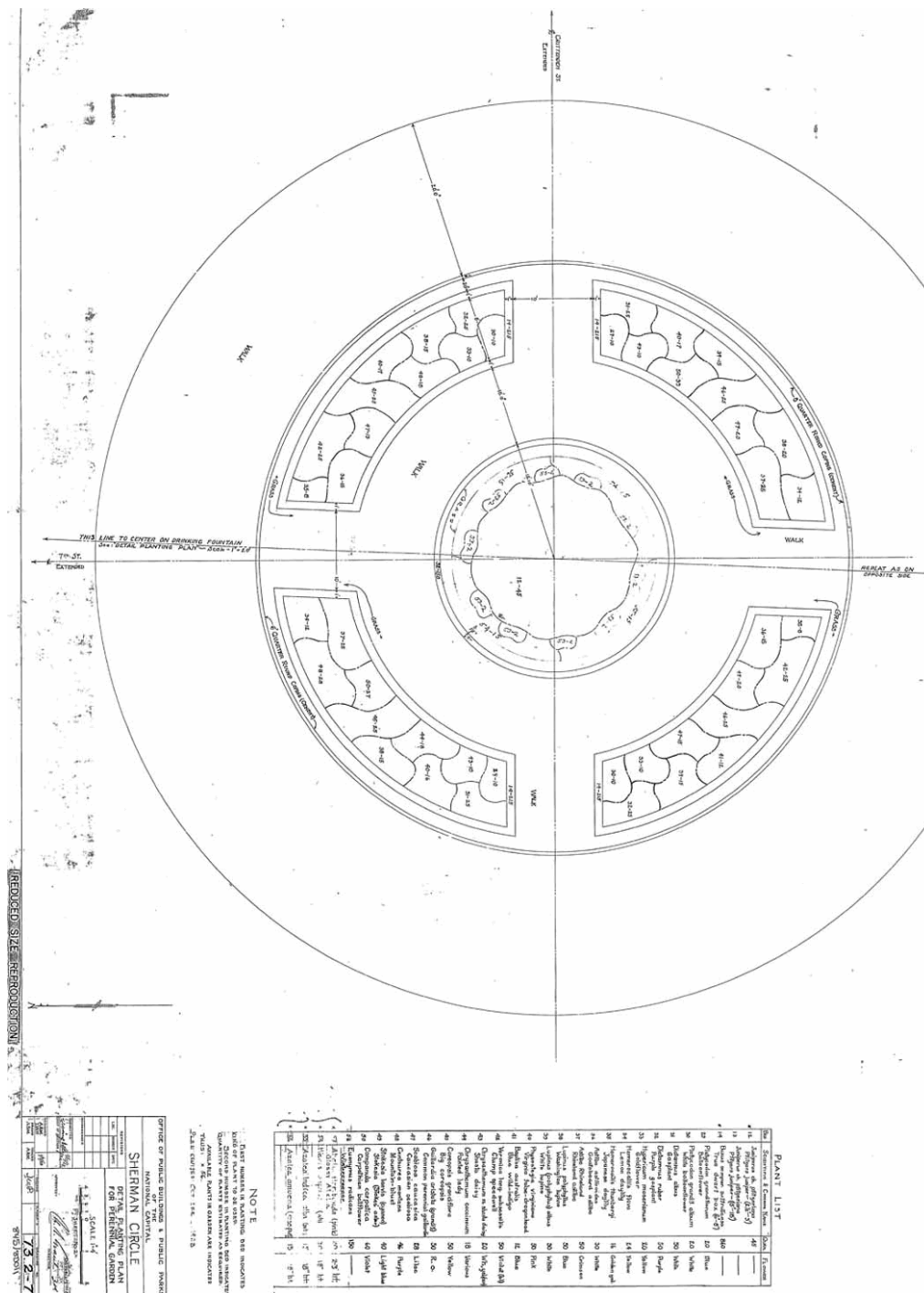


Irving W. Payne's original plan for the development of Sherman Circle, dated January 27, 1926. This plan was never realized, although it became something of a model for Payne's successful 1928 redesign (DSC TIC 845_80005).



Irving W. Payne's 1928 plan for the development of Sherman Circle. Completed in 1936, the basic arrangement of trees and walks is still present today and continues to define the cultural landscape (DSC TIC 845 80010).

Sherman Circle
Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations



Irving W. Payne's 1928 plan for five decorative perennial beds at the center of Sherman Circle. The plan called for a total of 1,919 individual plants, and the beds remained in place until 1947 (DSC TIC 845 80011).

Creation, Acquisition, Improvement, and Use of U.S. Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448: 1923-36

In addition to Sherman Circle, the 1923 extension of Washington's streets through the Petworth neighborhood also created four small parcels of land that, because of their close proximity to the circle, have always been associated with it. Unlike Sherman Circle, these parcels were not automatically turned over to the District, but rather remained the property of real estate developer Morris Cafritz. As such, each became a new city square: 3144 to the northwest of the circle, 3216 to the northeast, 3141 to the southwest, and 3219 to the southeast. The smaller squares, 3144 and 3219, each contained 0.20 acres. The larger squares, 3141 and 3216, contained 0.35 acres, and were further subdivided into three buildable lots (Baist 1919: 18-19; NPS 2009: 32, 33). As with Sherman Circle, the four reservations were also apparently graded and leveled, resulting in flat or gently sloping topography (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservations 438, 447, and 448).

By 1928, the federal government owned these four squares, the end result of a complicated series of land purchases and transfers fueled by a desire to set aside these spaces as small parks (Commissioners of DC 1926: 715; NCPPC 1927: 15-16; NCR Lands Records Files, Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448). There was a general belief that they should factor into the development plans for Sherman Circle and, above all else, a strong desire "to prevent the erection of houses with back yards facing the circle" (NCPPC 1927: 15). In moving to acquire these squares, it seems that the authorities were determined to prevent past mistakes. An identical arrangement of four squares also flanked Grant Circle, but only the smaller 0.20-acre parcels wound up becoming federal property. Several houses had instead been built on the larger .035-acre squares, thereby introducing undesirable elements into the landscape. Given a second chance at Sherman Circle, the DC Commissioners and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission pitched in to secure all four squares, and then turned them over to the OPB & PP. In the process, Square 3144 became U.S. Reservation 447, Square 3216 became U.S. Reservation 436, Square 3141 became U.S. Reservation 438, and Square 3219 became U.S. Reservation 448 (Baist 1919: 18-19; NPS 2009: 32, 33).

Apart from the assertion that no buildings should be allowed to encroach onto the new reservations, there was no clear vision as to how they should be improved. Landscape architect Payne never drafted any plans for these spaces, but he did submit a preliminary estimate calling for a total of 100 trees, a 20-foot diameter wading pool, and a 16-foot diameter sand bin (Payne to Col. Grant, Dec. 1, 1927, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). This work, however, did not proceed any further. The OPB & PP also seriously considered joining together Reservations 438 and 448 to the south of Sherman Circle. This idea seems to have originated with Col. Grant, who noted that such a thing had already been done around Scott Circle to create the triangular reservations containing the Daniel Webster and Samuel Hahnemann Memorials. Near Sherman Circle, Grant favored developing the enlarged tract as a playground, a facility that he felt was sorely needed in the neighborhood (Col. Grant to Col. W. B. Ladue, DC Comm., Sept. 15, 1927, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS). Tennis courts and other recreational equipment were also brought up as possible options, but the whole matter was dropped after the Petworth Citizen's Association sent a polite letter to Col. Grant thanking him for his interesting proposal but expressing a "unanimous sentiment against it." Speaking

for the association, Charles Stengle explained that the residents were very adverse to the “discomforts which are bound to arise if we have any sort of playground in front of our homes. . . . It is the desire of our people, if you cannot do more, to have you seed these triangles in grass” (Stengle to Col. Grant, Sept. 20, 1927, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS; Col. Grant to Col. Ladue, Oct. 4, 1927, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS).

The OPB & PP complied with this request, and the four reservations were sown with grass seed ca. 1928. Poured concrete sidewalks were also laid down along the edges of the reservations, and American elms planted in the narrow strips between the sidewalks and streets, but no further improvements were carried out. A single wooden bench, probably used as a bus stop, is visible in a ca. 1928 photograph of Reservation 447. Early electric street lights are the only other features known to have been present in any of the four reservations during the 1923-36 time period (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservations 438, 447, and 448).

Just as Sherman Circle became a prime example of a “passing-through” park, the four small reservations flanking it to the north and south evoked another of George Burnap’s design models: the “passing-around park.” With pedestrians limited to the exterior sidewalks, people literally passed around their edges (Burnap 1916: 92). More specifically, Burnap labeled these types of extremely small parks “the odds-and-ends in city development, the left-over or cut-off pieces of land often found at street convergings, [which] are usually so limited in area as to offer small opportunity for walks, seats or other development.” Planting was also necessarily limited, and “should never be of the sort to instantly demand recognition” (Burnap 1916: 96). Containing only American elms and turf, Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448, met this requirement as well.



NPS photos of U.S. Reservations 438 (top), 447 (middle), and 448 (bottom) taken ca. March 1928, after they had been planted with street trees but before the perimeter sidewalks had been installed (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservations 438, 447, and 448).

Subsequent Activities and Alterations: 1937-54

The earlier decision to omit recreational facilities from the area soon proved to be a regrettable choice, as government records reveal that Sherman Circle began to suffer from improper public use almost as soon as it was completed. On June 29, 1940, F. F. Gillen, Acting Superintendent of National Capital Parks, addressed a letter to the President of the Petworth Citizens' Association, George W. Potter. In it, Gillen noted that "considerable damage" had been done to the circle's trees and shrubbery by children at play. Specifically, boys and girls 10 to 15 years of age were "climbing the trees, breaking branches, carelessly damaging the shrubbery and committing other nuisances that are harmful to the trees, shrubs and plant materials and destructive to the good appearance of the park areas." Gillen closed by stating that the already-taxed park police could not spare any additional time for officers to patrol the scene, and requested that the association deal directly with the parents of the children in order to stop these "undesirable practices" (Gillen to Potter, June 29, 1940, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Potter replied that the association was aware of the problem and that they had already made appeals to the parents "to instruct their children not to be destructive to the shrubbery and flowers but the destruction continues" (Potter to Gillen, July 10, 1940, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Potter also promised to continue the effort and soon thereafter published Gillen's letter in the neighborhood newsletter, followed by his own call to action. It read in part: "As President of the Petworth Citizens' Association I am calling on all residents of Petworth to do all in their power to preserve the trees and shrubbery, flowers, and other plants . . . Let us all work together for the advancement of our community and may it never be necessary again for the Superintendent of Parks to call on us to protect the property" (Potter, 1940: 1). Even this direct approach, however, failed to appreciably reduce the negative impacts to the site.

On March 20, 1946, another of Petworth's residents, R. A. Devlin, wrote to Harry Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of the National Capital Parks, regarding the poor condition of Sherman Circle. He pointed out that pedestrians seeking a shortcut had long since forged an unsightly footpath directly through its central perennial beds, and "the children in the neighborhood seem to take a special delight in playing in this spot with the result that it must be a nuisance for the maintenance division to keep up." In Devlin's opinion, the net result of this collective misuse was that Sherman Circle did not compare favorably with Grant Circle, located a mere four blocks away along Illinois Avenue. He went on to explain his rationale in considerable detail:

"I think that the main reason is that the landscape treatment of Grant Circle provided for a beautiful tree directly in its center which attracts the eye from no matter what avenue or street one approaches the park. It makes a most pleasing and attractive vista and I notice that Grant Circle seems less difficult to maintain. The shrubbery in Grant circle, moreover, seems to have been placed with better effect. At least to me my general impression is more favorable. I would appreciate it if you should happen to be in the vicinity sometime to look the situation over. I am voicing the opinion of others in the neighborhood" (Devlin to Thompson, Mar. 20, 1946, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).

Although Thompson's reply has since been lost, it seems that he took Devlin's observations quite seriously. One year after this correspondence, in March 1947, the National Capital Parks completely revamped the center of the circle by replacing the perennial beds with a cluster of

seven Japanese cedar trees surrounded by concentric circular hedges of glossy privet, lace shrub, and common boxwood (DSC TIC 845_80005). This new arrangement probably did expedite maintenance, but it unfortunately did not eliminate all forms of inappropriate public use from Sherman Circle.

Sometime after 1936, the National Capital Parks installed 33 park benches inside the circle, but by June of 1948, age, misuse, and outright vandalism had resulted in the destruction of all but 11 of them. In response to a citizen's request, Superintendent Irving C. Root had an additional 10 benches installed, but by the following November four had been "smashed by vandals" and damaged so severely that the ironwork was "bent entirely out of shape." Root also had these benches repaired or replaced as necessary, but cautioned that if such behavior continued it would be necessary "to give up this constant replacement in the future" (J. Jay Wolf to DC Director of Construction, June 2, 1948; Root to Wolf, June 11 and Nov. 19, 1948; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).

Similar instances of inappropriate public use also took place in Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448. Between 1938 and 1953, Miss Ethel Giddings, a resident of 4614 Kansas Avenue, made several written and verbal complaints concerning children playing baseball and football in these small parks (Assoc. Supt. National Capital Parks to Supt. National Capital Park, June 4, 1952; Finnan to Giddings, Mar. 12 and June 13, 1938; Giddings to Finnan, June 9 1938; Giddings to Supt. National Capital Parks, Apr. 22, 1945; Irving C. Root to Giddings, Supt. National Capital Parks, Apr. 25, 1945; Harry T. Thompson, Assoc. National Capital Parks, to Giddings, June 12, 1952 and Mar. 26, 1953; all correspondence in D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS). Miss Giddings was primarily concerned with Reservation 438, southwest of Sherman Circle, which she could see through a window in her house. On one occasion she "was struck on the shin by a hard ball" while walking along Buchanan Street, and an errant baseball broke one of the windows in her car. The park itself also suffered, as worn patches of bare earth served as bases within the makeshift baseball diamond. National Capital Parks routinely laid down grass seed, but the children never gave it a chance to grow. Park police officers were regularly dispatched to the scene, but the games always resumed moments after they departed (Giddings to Supt. National Capital Parks, Apr. 22, 1945, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS). The children also damaged and defaced the "no ball playing" signs, which consequently had to be replaced several times (Capt. P. J. Carroll, U.S. Park Police, to Finnan, June 4, 1938; Finnan to Giddings, June 9, 1938; Thompson to George E. Clark, Chief DC Construction and Repair Dept., May 13, 1953; Thompson to Giddings, June 12, 1953; all correspondence in D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS).

In June 1949, Harry T. Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of the National Capital Parks, authorized a new approach to the "annual problem of trying to discourage ball playing in the triangles north and south of Sherman Circle." He called for the planting of four trees in each of the larger reservations and three each in the smaller reservations, all of which were to be arranged "in an irregular manner" so as to interrupt the open spaces and thus eliminate the ball fields. Because this was a purely utilitarian project, Thompson felt that the type of tree was "not too important," and he ultimately left the choice up to George W. Harding, chief of the horticulture and maintenance division (Thompson to Harding, June 2, 1949, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS). If Harding authored a planting list or drafted a landscape plan,

neither has survived, leaving some doubt as to the species composition of these 14 trees. However, a subsequent 1953 plan shows that two Sophoras (probably *Sophora japonica*), a birch, and a hornbeam already were established inside Reservation 438 by that time, with another hornbeam and a honey locust inside Reservation 448 to the southeast of Sherman Circle (Hanson 1953). These trees were presumably the ones planted in 1949, but the identity of the third tree within Reservation 448, which evidently did not survive, remains unknown. Because these planting arrangements were to be repeated “for the two similar triangles to the north of Sherman circle,” the same species were apparently used in Reservation 436 as in 438, and in 447 as in 448 (Merel S. Sager, Planning Div. Chief NCP, to Thompson, June 2, 1949, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS).

Regardless, these trees proved inadequate to prevent the children from carrying on as usual. In a June 12, 1952, letter to Miss Giddings, Asst. Superintendent Thompson described the trees as “weak specimens” that had “not fulfilled their purpose as intended” (Thompson to Giddings, June 12 1952, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS). She suggested that shrubs be planted as replacements, but Thompson informed her that such an action would not be in keeping with NPS plans for the reservations. He instead called for additional trees to be planted in Reservations 438 and 448 during the fall of 1953. Doing so would preserve the “park-like effect” of the area and also prevent potential traffic hazards. The trees themselves, as Thompson put it, were to be “a little on the unusual side” (Thompson to Giddings, May 15, 1953, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS). The planting plan, dated July 20, 1953, specified two Kentucky coffee trees, two raisin trees, and a Persian hornbeam for planting in Reservation 438, and a Kentucky coffee tree and raisin tree in Reservation 448. At the same time, the existing hornbeam and birch inside Reservation 438, and the hornbeam in Reservation 448, were to be removed (Hanson 1953).

Although Thompson directed Harding to carry out this plan “when conditions are right,” it is unknown whether or not it was ever fully implemented (Harding to Thompson, July 2, 1953, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS). The available written documentation contains no confirmation that the work was completed, and there are few subsequent landscape architectural drawings for the area before the 1980s. Those that do exist provide the locations of the extant trees within the small reservations but identify few by species. None of the “unusual” choices called for in the 1953 plan are named, and consequently it is unknown whether or not the specimens were ever actually present on the ground. Judging by tree placement alone, the later drawings indicate that some elements of the 1953 plan may have been realized, but a more definitive statement is impossible given the dearth of available information.

Change and Decline: 1955-83

No additional information relating to the use, improvement, or maintenance of Sherman Circle or its associated reservations is available until April 1, 1955. On this date the DC Department of Sanitary Engineering requested permission to drill a test boring in the southwest quadrant of the circle as part of the upcoming extension of the East Piney Branch Trunk Sewer. Assoc. Supt. Thompson granted the request but stipulated that park property must be protected or, if that was not possible, restored to its previous condition following the work. The test was completed by that August, and soon thereafter the DC engineers took up the challenge of planning the installation of the sewer line. They sent a formal request seeking authorization

for the project on February 7, 1956, along with sheets of drawings showing the planned route of the sewer (Roy L. Orndorff, Supt. DC Office of Planning, Design and Engineering, to Edward J. Kelly, Supt. National Capital Parks, Apr. 1, 1955 and Feb. 7, 1956; Thompson to Orndorff, Apr. 14, 1955; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). It was to bisect Sherman Circle along the center line of Kansas Avenue and also include two additional spurs in the circle's southwest quadrant (DSC TIC 845_80017).

Because these drawings include the locations of all extant trees within Sherman Circle and its adjacent reservations, they also show how the landscape's vegetation had changed up to that time. To the north of the circle, Reservations 436 and 447 respectively contained five trees and two trees. To the south, Reservations 438 and 448 contained six trees and three trees (DSC TIC 845_80017). Most of these specimens likely dated to the 1949 planting, but given the numbers at least a few must have been added after that time and therefore could have been the products of the 1953 plan. Aerial photographs reveal that much of Sherman Circle's shrubbery remained in place, and 61 of the 84 tree locations specified in the 1928 plan were still occupied with either original or replacement specimens. However, only four of the seven Japanese cedars planted at the center of the circle in 1949 were still extant (DSC TIC 845_80010; DSC TIC 845_80017; Washington Star aerial photo, mid-1950s, DC Public Library). The inappropriate public use of the park undoubtedly contributed to this decline. However, because most of Sherman Circle's trees were elms, it is also likely that Dutch elm disease, which was established in Washington, DC, by 1950, was also beginning to adversely affect tree health. This was certainly the case for the American elms planted as street trees around the edges of the small reservations, which were already being replaced by Norway maples and oaks (Hanson 1953). On the whole, however, the landscape's vegetation had fared reasonably well.

National Capital Parks authorized the Piney Branch Trunk Sewer project on March 23, 1956, and such a massive undertaking had a deleterious effect on the Sherman Circle landscape. The work entailed the excavation of a subsurface tunnel as well as open cut sewers at ground level, junction chambers, manholes, and the construction of a deep vertical shaft at the northwest intersection of Sherman Circle and Kansas Avenue. The placement of this shaft necessitated the removal of an American elm, and the southwest quadrant of the circle, extending from Crittenden Street to Kansas Avenue, was closed for construction purposes and encased in a six-foot high board fence. Reservations 438 and 448 were also closed to the public and used as temporary storage sites for construction materials, sheds, and equipment. Reservations 436 and 447 were reserved as ancillary storage sites, but do not seem to have been used as such. The District of Columbia agreed to pay all costs incurred in restoring Sherman Circle and the four reservations to their previous conditions following the close of the project (DSC TIC 845_80018; Thompson to Orndorff, Mar. 23 and Dec. 6, 1956; J. L. McIlvaine, Underground Construction Co., to Robert C. Horn, Chief Engineer NCP, Nov. 15, 1956; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).

The installation of the sewer was complete by January 1960, at which time National Capital Parks officials turned to the District's obligations towards the restoration of the landscape (Robert P. Stevens, Chief of NCP Landscape Architectural Branch, Jan. 28, 1960, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). The damage was significant: a large number of trees and shrubs

needed to be replaced; the southern drinking fountain had been disconnected and needed to be reset; broken stone and other coarse material strewn about the property had to be cleaned up; and the walkways – some sections of which had been entirely obliterated – required repair or replacement, as did broken water lines, cast iron drains and underground equipment (Robert C. Horne, Design and Construction Chief NCP, to David W. Auld, Dir. DC Dept. of Sanitary Engineering, July 7, 1960, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). However, more than six months passed without any progress. On July 23, 1960, a Mr. Elvove, a local resident, presented a clear picture of the scene in a letter to the National Capital Parks. Sherman Circle had by necessity been an eyesore during the sewer project, but it was still very much an eyesore. Elvove questioned why it had not at least been “possible to clear the sidewalks of all the overgrown grass and dirt that are now so very much in evidence” and complained that “the drinking fountain remains high and dry on the ground like a very ugly and dirty statue.” Once more Sherman Circle’s poor condition invited an unflattering comparison with Grant Circle, where there were “many flowering trees and shrubs.” According to Mr. Elvove, the former had “never had any such blooming adornment,” even prior to the construction (E. Elvove to National Capital Parks, July 23, 1960, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). Robert C. Horne, Chief of the National Capital Park’s Division of Design and Construction, replied with regret that the restoration had lagged, but also with an assurance that the District of Columbia would soon commence this work. According to scheduling projections, by early September repair crews would be sent out to construct new concrete walkways, replace the drinking fountain, and see to the grading, installation of topsoil, and seeding of the circle’s grass panels. Additionally, the trees and shrubs would be replaced during the fall planting season (Horne to Elvove, Aug. 3, 1960, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).

Nonetheless, by the summer of 1961, the restoration was still not complete. Mr. Elvove again wrote to the National Capital Parks on June 12, 1961, expressing his displeasure over the ongoing delays. As of this date there were no benches located inside the circle, the drinking fountain remained on its side, and the shrubs had not been replaced. Later that week William M. Haussmann, the new Chief of Design and Construction for the National Capital Parks, forwarded a copy of the NPS construction drawings for the drinking fountain to the DC Department of Sanitary Engineering and stressed that completing the restoration of the circle as quickly as possible was of the utmost importance. The necessary work apparently progressed rapidly after this point. By July 17, twelve new park benches ringed the outer concrete walk, and shortly thereafter they were moved nearer to the center of the circle. Specific details are lacking, but the decision to relocate the benches was apparently intended as a means of combatting the recurrent inappropriate use of park facilities (Elvove to NCP Chief of Design and Construction, June 12, 1961; Elvove to Haussmann, Aug. 31 and Sept. 22, 1961; Haussmann to Elvove, July 17 and Sept. 13, 1961; Haussmann to James C. Robertson, Jr., DC Dept. of Sanitary Engineering, June 19, 1961; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). This effort was apparently unsuccessful, as the benches were recorded as being in “poor condition” within a few years (DSC TIC 845_80018). The drinking fountain had also evidently finally been reinstalled by July 25, 1961, at which time the sanitary engineering department submitted a written request to T. Sutton Jett, Superintendent of the National Capital Parks, seeking written confirmation that the restoration of Sherman Circle had been satisfactorily completed (Robertson to Jett, July 25, 1961, 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS).

Haussmann replied on behalf of the superintendent on August 30, 1961. An NPS inspection revealed that while the majority of the restoration work had indeed been completed, two important items remained outstanding: the reseeded of Sherman Circle's grass panels, and the planting of 22 new trees to replace those that had been lost in the course of the sewer installation. Haussmann estimated that \$4,300.00 would cover the cost of the seeding and planting, and the District accepted this ruling and authorized the additional expenditure on October 10. Superintendent Jett then followed with an internal memorandum that instructed the National Capital Parks' maintenance division to "undertake this work at your earliest convenience" (Haussmann to Robertson, Aug. 30, 1961; Jett to Maintenance Chief NCP, Oct. 19, 1961; Robertson to Haussmann, Oct. 10, 1961; all correspondence in 1460/34/66A-1097/79 FRS). The restoration of Sherman Circle was ostensibly completed shortly thereafter, but there is no way to confirm this assumption. There is no subsequent discussion of any restoration work related to the trunk sewer project, and the related correspondence ceases altogether after December 6, 1962, the date upon which the NPS deeded a small 24 square-foot section of Reservation 438 near the intersection of Kansas Avenue and Sherman Circle to the District of Columbia. This transfer allowed for a slight enlargement of the sidewalk (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservation 438; G. M. Thornett, Sec. to the DC Comms., to Robert C. Horne, Assoc. Dir. NCR, Mar. 25, 1963, D24/24/68A-3201/79 FRS).

There are few additional sources of information, but those that do exist indicate that the missing trees may not have been replaced. According to a November 1963 topographical map of Sherman Circle, at least 28 of the 84 locations that Payne reserved for specimen trees in his original 1928 plan were vacant at this time (DSC TIC 845_80010; DSC TIC 845_80018). Moreover, while four Japanese cedars were present at the center of the circle when installation of the sewer began in 1956, the 1963 map identifies only a single tree in this location (DSC TIC 845_80017; DSC TIC 845_80018). Given the timing, the other three specimens probably died as a result of the sewer project and therefore should have been replaced. The fact that they were not, combined with the other absent trees, strongly indicates that the requisite replacement planting was never actually carried out.

The reasoning behind this omission is not entirely clear, but most likely relates to a new redevelopment plan for Sherman Circle produced by the NPS in February of 1964 (DSC TIC 845_80019). This plan proposed to add an understory of flowering dogwood, eastern redbud, amur corktree, and American hornbeam to the circle's surviving vegetation, which was mostly comprised of mature American elms and a few oaks and sycamores. The plan also called for a significant simplification of the circle's circulation system to create a single circular walkway with six short arterial spurs connecting to the traffic rotary. A notation written in the margin of the drawing explained that the existing system of walks, which dated back to Payne's 1928 plan, was "fragmentary and cuts the circle up in many small unrelated parts." In contrast, the new system would be "enlarged in scale to complement the scale of the circle and to visually direct pedestrian traffic into and around the circle." Overall, Sherman Circle would become a "visual relief in the area and sitting and playing will not be encouraged." As such, the plan did not include any benches within the circle. The two drinking fountains were also to have been removed and four trash receptacles installed (DSC TIC 845_80019).

Although people were not encouraged to linger within the circle itself, this was not the case inside the four adjacent reservations. According to the redevelopment plan, a bus stop was to be added to each of the small parks. Fittingly, the primary purpose was to provide bus patrons with a “pleasant spot” to wait for their rides, but the bus stop benches could also serve as “supplementary seating areas” for anyone wishing to use them. Trash receptacles would be installed near the bus stops and regularly spaced along the perimeters of the reservations. Play areas were also planned for Reservations 436 and 438. As stipulated in the design notes, these features were to be “provided with sand boxes and sculptural playforms scaled to the pre-school children” who would use them. The play areas would also be conveniently located so that parents and children would have to cross as few streets as possible, screened with dogwoods and redbuds, and partially enclosed by wrought iron fencing (DSC TIC 845_80019). Such installations would bring local residents out into the neighborhood parks for wholesome, family-friendly activities and, ideally, encourage them to take on an active role in the welfare of their community.

Each of the four small parks also contained preexisting vegetation, most of which was to be retained and apparently dated to either the 1949 or 1953 plantings or the restoration following the trunk sewer installation (DSC TIC 845_80019). Reservation 436 featured two locust trees and a shrub. Reservation 438 contained a total of five trees, including a birch and a locust. Two shrubs grew in Reservation 447, and there were three trees in Reservation 448 (DSC TIC 845_80018). According to the redevelopment plan, clumps of Eastern redbud were to be added to all four reservations, with flowering dogwood trees also planted in Reservations 436 and 438. These new plantings were intended to visually link the reservations with Sherman Circle, and also lend a more suitable sense of scale to the individual small parks (DSC TIC 845_80019).

The redevelopment plan, the total cost of which was estimated at \$75,174, never moved beyond the planning stage, and at least one local resident was extremely displeased by this outcome (DSC TIC 845_80019). Miss Ethel Elvove, evidently a relative of the Mr. Elvove who had first contacted the National Capital Parks regarding the condition of Sherman Circle back in 1960, now took up the matter and questioned why the planned improvements had been halted. Her answer came from Assistant Regional Director Rex Scouten. In his March 15, 1968, letter, Scouten thanked Elvove for her concern and explained that the NPS abandoned the redevelopment plan only after “a survey indicated that an overwhelming majority of the neighborhood did not desire additional development of the Circle.” Scouten also stated that benches had been briefly installed inside Sherman Circle in 1965, but removed shortly thereafter because they “too met with the disapproval of the neighborhood” (Scouten to E. Elvove, Mar. 15, 1968, NCR CLP Files, Reservation 369). That June, Miss Elvove wrote a letter to First Lady Lady Bird Johnson commending her beautification work within Washington, DC, and imploring her to personally take up the task of improving the appearance of Sherman Circle. Miss Elvove also disagreed with Scouten’s assertion that the neighborhood residents had come out against the redevelopment plan. She stated that “no one ever conducted a survey in my vicinity and I know of no neighbors who were contacted,” and opined that it was hard to believe that the NPS regularly conducted such surveys before commencing these types of projects. She also wondered “how could anyone object to

flowering bushes and shrubs,” especially since many such plants bloomed each year in Grant Circle (Ethel to Johnson, June 4, 1968, NCR CLP Files, Reservation 369). The first lady’s office sent a polite but noncommittal response, and no further action is recorded (Bess Abell, Social Secretary to Mrs. Johnson, to Elvove, June 28, 1968, NCR CLP Files, Reservation 369).

Up until this time, Sherman Circle had remained in reasonably good condition despite the damage incurred from the construction projects and inappropriate public use. A field survey believed to have been conducted sometime in the early to mid-1960s and an accompanying set of four photographs portray the circle in a largely positive light. The walks had generally held up well over time, although some sections had lifted or settled slightly and therefore presented tripping hazards. The large trees were in good condition. Many of the smaller trees, which had evidently been planted as replacements sometime after the completion of Payne’s plan in 1936, looked “somewhat ragged.” The surviving Japanese cedar at the center of the circle was growing well and functioned as a fine specimen tree, but the ring of glossy privet around it was “broken and in not too good condition.” The grass turf was also deemed to be “in fairly good shape” and “not too badly worn.” There were a few bare spots and social trails here and there, but nothing that some reseeding would not fix. Both drinking fountains were in working order, and even a pair of “no ball playing signs” had survived intact. The total lack of any reference to benches suggests that they had been removed by this time, and there is no subsequent mention of seats ever being reinstalled. The only truly distressing part of the survey was the notation that “bits of broken glass litter [the] entire circle” (Undated assessment and photos in NCR CLP Files, Reservations 369, 436, 438, 447, and 448). Such a situation speaks to ineffective or irregular maintenance, and was a precursor to the much more severe decline in conditions across Sherman Circle and its four associated reservations over the next two decades.

The crime rate in the Petworth neighborhood increased in the late 1960s and then spiked in the 1970s and 1980s. (For relevant newspaper clippings, consult the Petworth Vertical File, Washingtoniana Division, MLK Library.) During this time, Sherman Circle became something of a hangout and rallying point for local gangs, and was decried in local newspapers as a “constant trouble spot” (Gilliam 1964; Koprowski 1966). In her 1968 letter to First Lady Johnson, Miss Elvove flatly stated that the entire area seemed “to be in the slums according to the National Capital Region of the National Park Service” (Elvove to Johnson, June 4, 1968, NCR CLP Files, Reservation 369). The neighborhood was in decline, and the physical landscape fabric of the circle and its associated reservations also suffered. The concrete walkways became cracked and broken. Both of Sherman Circle’s original pedestal drinking fountains were removed by the mid-1980s. However, the southern fountain was replaced by the modern NPS drinking fountain still in place today, the installation of which apparently involved a slight alteration in the shape of the underlying concrete walkway. The only major addition to the landscape was a city bus shelter, which was installed in the northeast corner of Reservation 436 by 1985 (DSC TIC 845_80025).

Much of the vegetation also died off during these decades, and aerial photography serves as the best record of the deterioration. In 1964, the circle’s foliage was still relatively lush. Most of the shrubbery was gone, but many trees were still in place. The situation was much the

Sherman Circle

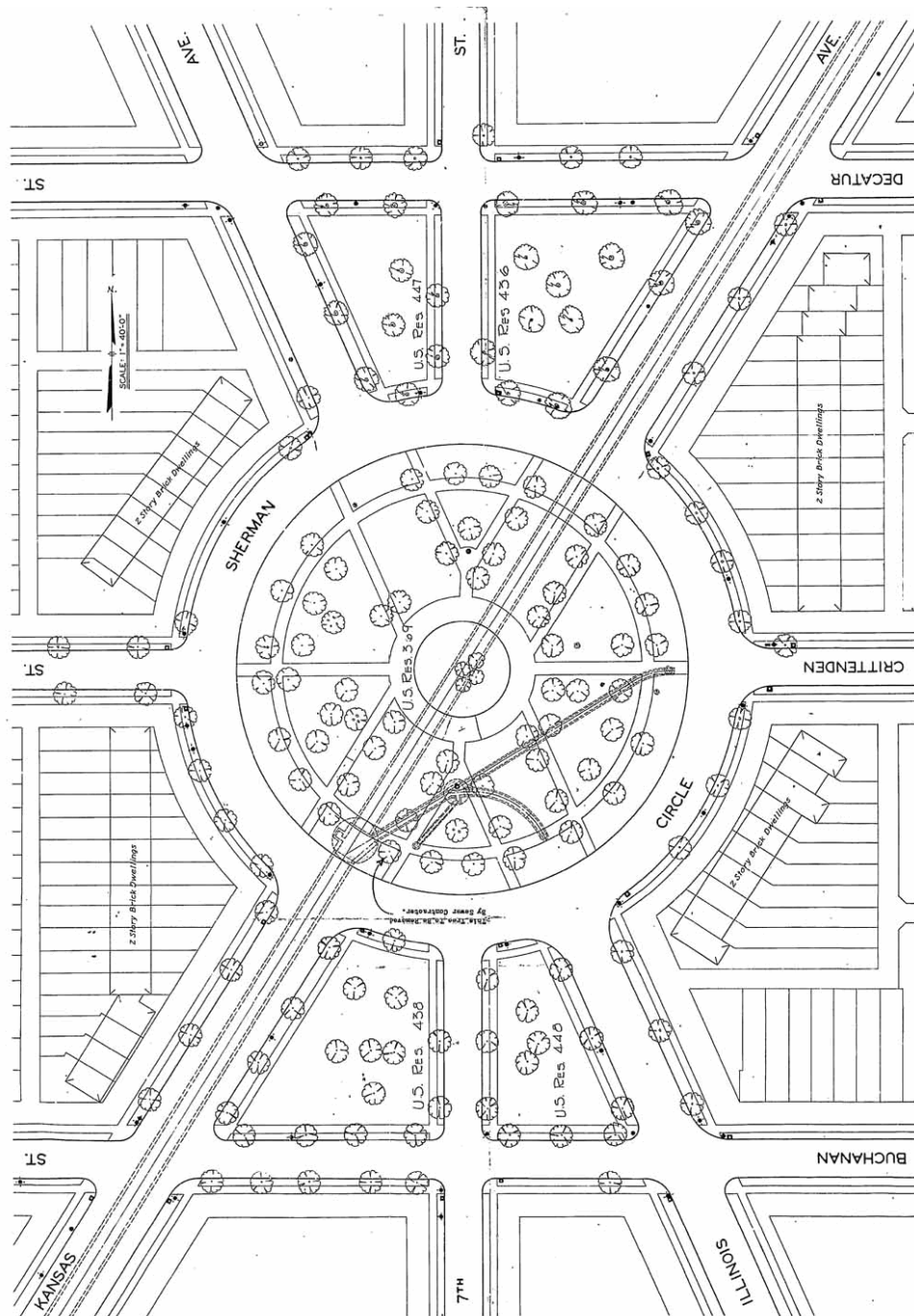
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same in 1970, but by 1980 the tree canopy was seriously denuded (NCR aerial photos 1964, 1970, and 1980). Five years later, the central Japanese cedar was gone and only six of the original 84 trees specified in the 1928 plan of Sherman Circle were still extant, a 93 percent mortality rate. An additional 13 replacement trees were also in place, but more than three-quarters of the original tree locations were totally devoid of plantings (DSC TIC 845_80010; DSC TIC 845_80018; DSC TIC 845_80025; NPS "Evaluation of Planting of 1928" n.d.). In addition to the social factors impacting the site, Dutch elm disease had also clearly caught up with Sherman Circle's elms. However, the presence of Zelkovas – likely *Zelkova serrata*, a tree with a vase-like appearance similar to the American elm, but immune to Dutch elm disease – inside the circle and around the perimeters of the adjacent reservations also indicates that there had already been some effort undertaken to repopulate the decimated fauna. Zelkovas were also planted as street trees around the four smaller reservations (DSC TIC 845_80025).

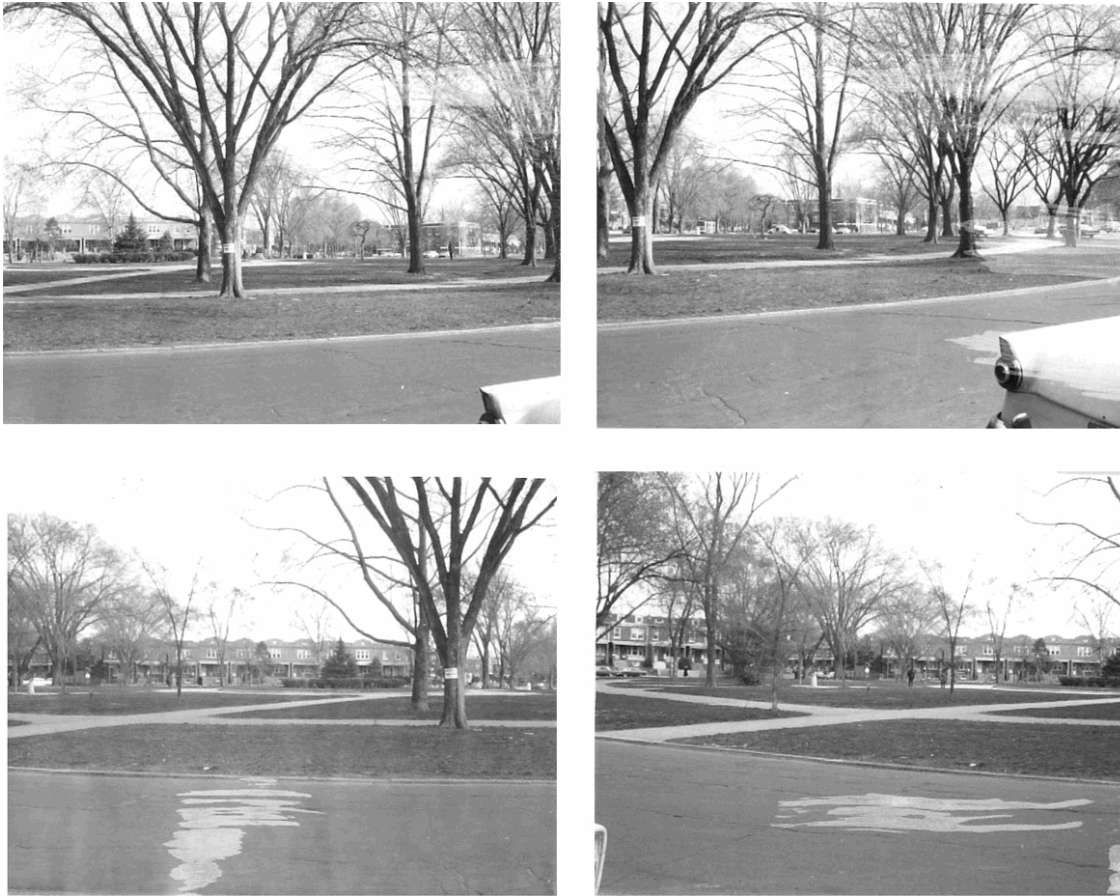


Aerial photograph looking north and showing the Sherman Circle cultural landscape in the early to mid-1950s prior to the construction of the Piney Branch Trunk Sewer (Washington DC Public Library, Washingtoniana Div., Washington Star Photo Archive).

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This 1956 plan shows the routes of the Piney Branch Trunk Sewer and its associated shafts passing through Sherman Circle. The prolonged construction project had a severely negative impact on the cultural landscape (DSC TIC 845_80017).



Four ca. 1960s photographs of Sherman Circle taken during an NPS survey reveal that the site was in reasonably good condition at that time (NCR CLP Files, Reservation 369).

Landscape Rehabilitation and Recent History: 1984-2011

By 1984, Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 were placed under the jurisdiction of Rock Creek Park within the National Capital Region of the NPS. All of the walks were replaced that fall, and in the early winter Ranger Peggy Fleming submitted a request for additional services. She noted that “due to many trees dying, the Circle is in need of major attention,” and called for a “comprehensive landscape plan to identify the distinguishing qualities and character of this Circle and its adjoining angles.” Because of limited personnel, low maintenance plantings were required, with installation phased in over a three-year period. The request was approved on December 20, 1984, and a finalized landscape plan was needed no later than August 30, 1985 (Fleming 1984). Darwina Neal, Landscape Architect for the Region’s Design Services Branch, led this effort and created a new planting plan that emulated Irving Payne’s historic 1928 arrangement. Because the propagation of disease-tolerant elm cultivars was still an emerging science, Neal chose to use the ‘Village Green’ variety of *Zelkova serrata*, and employed only three other plants: American hornbeam, ‘Regent’ Japanese pagoda tree, and ‘Sugar Tyme’ crabapple. Sixteen *Zelkovas* were planted inside Sherman Circle in the fall of 1985 during Phase I of the project. During Phase

II, carried out in 1986, 25 more Zelkovas were planted inside the circle, as were 12 crabapples. The four adjacent reservations were planted in 1987 during Phase III. Reservation 436 received nine crabapples, three pagoda trees, and the only new hornbeam; Reservation 438 received nine crabapples; Reservation 447 received six crabapples and two pagoda trees; and Reservation 448 received nine crabapples (DSC TIC 845_80025; NPS 1985).

Neal incorporated most of the pre-existing vegetation into her plan. This included elms, oaks, and sycamores inside Sherman Circle; oaks, a pagoda tree, a cherry, and an ash inside Reservation 436; oaks and a pagoda tree inside Reservation 438; a honey locust and a hornbeam inside Reservation 447; and oaks inside Reservation 448. Street trees around the perimeters of the four small reservations were to be replaced by the District as needed. The plan also called for the removal of two camperdown elms and an American holly from Sherman Circle, three of the few surviving specimens from Payne's original 1928 plan. The elms, which were probably diseased, were taken out and replaced with crabapples, but the holly was not removed as originally planned. Upon completion of the project, Sherman Circle contained approximately 70 trees, nearly all of which occupied a tree location specified in Payne's 1928 plan (DSC TIC 845_80010; DSC TIC 845_80025; NPS 1985).

The final cost of carrying out all three phases of planting is unknown, but Neal budgeted \$31,500 for plant materials alone. In November 1985, she revised the plan to include 12 benches placed in four groups of three along Sherman Circle's outer walkway. However, these benches were not installed, and the overall expense of the project may have been responsible for their omission. Likewise, Neal advocated for the installation of a floral display at the vacant center of the circle, but recognized that any such decorative planting would have to wait until additional funding and labor could be made available (DSC TIC 845_80025; NPS 1985). That wait ended in 1998, when the NPS planted a new flower bed as the centerpiece of Sherman Circle. A four-foot-wide ring of 'Sunny Border Blue' veronicas encircled a massing of 165 orange sunblaze roses. Steel landscape edging was installed along the outer edge of the veronicas in order to protect the plants. American hollies were also added to Reservations 436 and 447 around this time (DSC TIC 845_80026). Unfortunately, Sherman Circle's flower bed lasted no more than a few years. By 2005, the area had been seeded over with grass, but the outline of the former bed was still plainly visible in aerial photographs (NCR aerial photo 2005).

On March 27, 2004, Casey Trees, a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit committed to the restoration, enhancement, and protection of the city's tree canopy, planted two disease-tolerant American elm cultivars as street trees along the east side of Kansas Avenue within Reservation 438. These specimens replaced two trees that had previously occupied these locations and either died or became seriously degraded sometime after 1998. The planting was part of Casey Trees' American Elm Restoration Program, designed to restore the local American elm population (Casey Trees 2011; DSC TIC 845_80026). On April 17, 2009, Casey Trees returned to Sherman Circle and worked with the NPS to coordinate a one-day event during which volunteers planted a total of 29 trees across the circle and its four adjacent reservations. These trees presumably replaced specimens that had died or substantially declined since the 1985-87 replanting. Disease-tolerant American elm cultivars were selected instead of Zelkovas. Payne's 1928 plan served as a guide for the locating the plantings within

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the circle, and those within the other reservations seem to have been loosely based upon Neal's 1985 plan. These tree plantings were as follows:

Sherman Circle: eight American elms, three crabapples, and one London planetree

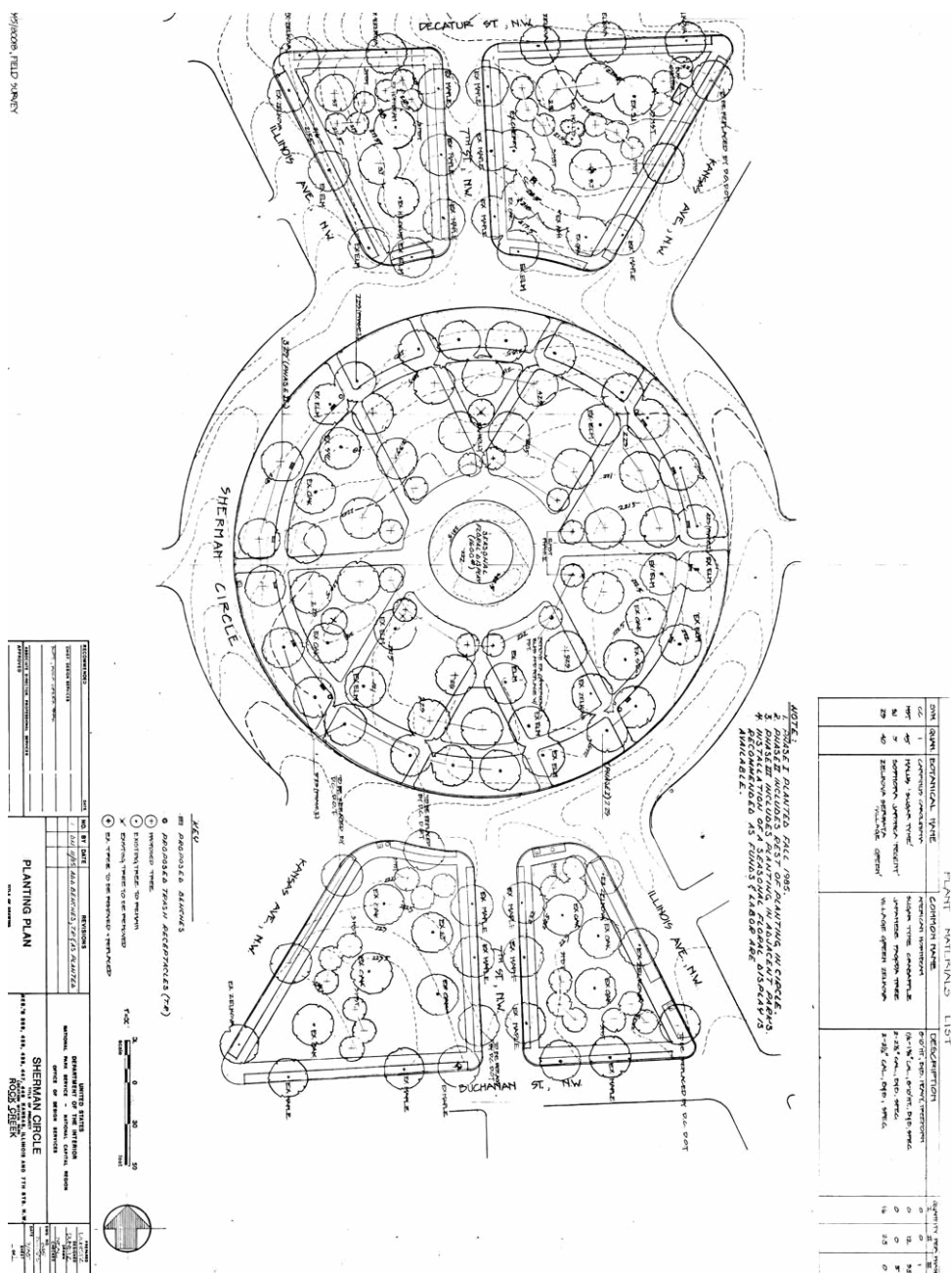
Reservation 436: one American elm, one crabapple, and one Yoshino cherry

Reservation 438: one American elm and two crabapples

Reservation 447: two American elms, one crabapple, one Japanese pagoda tree, one honey locust, and one American hornbeam

Reservation 448: four crabapples (Casey Trees 2011)

During the winter of 2009-10, a storm broke one of the lower limbs off a large American elm inside Sherman Circle, leaving behind a significant wound. In January 2011, Casey Trees stated that the storm damage threatened the tree's longevity (Herwig 2011). Because the elm is one of the very few remaining specimens dating to the 1923-36 historic period, its death would be a significant loss to the landscape. On the whole, however, the vegetation inside Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 has fared well since the 2009 planting, and there have been no significant changes to the landscape since that time.



Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

This section provides an evaluation of the physical integrity of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape by comparing the existing conditions with those landscape characteristics and features present during the periods of significance, 1889 and 1923-36. Landscape characteristics are the tangible and intangible aspects of a cultural landscape which express its historic character and integrity, and which allow visitors to understand the history of a site. Each characteristic or feature is classified as either a contributing or non-contributing element of the site's overall historic significance.

Landscape characteristics are classified as contributing if they were present during the property's period of significance, and non-contributing if they were not present during that period. Non-contributing features may in some cases be considered "compatible" if they are determined to fit within the physical context of the historic period and match the character of contributing elements in a way that is sensitive to the construction techniques, organizational methods, or design strategies of the historic period. Features designated as "incompatible" are those that are not harmonious with the quality of the cultural landscape, and whose existence can lessen the historic character of the property.

This section also includes an evaluation of the property's integrity in accordance with National Register criteria. As defined by the National Register, historic integrity is the authenticity of a property's identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the site's historic period. The National Register recognizes seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. All or at least several of these aspects must be present for a site to retain historic integrity. To be listed on the National Register, a property must not only be shown to have significance under one of the four criteria, but also should be demonstrated to retain integrity to the period of significance.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS AND FEATURES

Contributing landscape characteristics identified for the Sherman Circle cultural landscape are land use, topography, circulation, vegetation, small scale features, spatial organization, and views and vistas.

Land use at Sherman Circle and its four associated reservations has not changed since the period of significance. Both then and now, the cultural landscape has functioned as urban parkland: Sherman Circle as a "passing-through" park and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 as "passing-around" parks.

Overall, the Sherman Circle cultural landscape slopes down from south to north, with the highest elevation (224 feet above sea level) near the southwest corner of Reservation 438 and the lowest elevation (215 feet above sea level) at the northwest corner of Reservation 447. There is also a secondary declivity moving west from the northeast corner of Reservation 436 (221 feet above sea level) and the low point of 215 feet at Reservation 447. However, in most cases the grade changes within the cultural landscape are extremely gradual, giving the appearance of flat terrain. This

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outward regularity reflects the fact that Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 were graded, filled, and leveled during the initial phase of Morris Cafritz's "Shermanor" development in the 1920s, creating the topography that persists to this day.

The Sherman Circle cultural landscape retains the circulation pattern established during the period of significance, although the physical materials have since been replaced in kind. Historically, Irving Payne's 1928 design of Sherman Circle established a system of concrete walkways as the site's internal skeleton. A 10-foot-wide circular walkway was inset 28.5 feet from the edge of the park. A larger 20-foot-wide circular walkway ringed the site's central focal point, a 38-foot diameter circle planted in perennial beds. Ten lateral crosswalks ran between the circular walkways and extended out to meet the Sherman Circle traffic rotary. Eight of these walkways measured eight feet wide and were situated in line with the edges of Kansas and Illinois Avenues. The remaining two measured 10 feet wide and formed a continuation of the centerline of Crittenden Street. The entire arrangement resembled a wheeled spoke, and created 20 interlocking grass panels that Payne planted with trees and shrubs. The present layout of Sherman Circle is still defined by this system of radial concrete walkways. Likewise, concrete sidewalks, first laid down around the perimeters of Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 during the historic period, remain in place today. All of these routes continue to serve as conduits for pedestrians moving through Sherman Circle and around its four associated reservations.

Of all its characteristics, the vegetation within the Sherman Circle cultural landscape has experienced the greatest change since the close of the period of significance in 1936. Historically, Irving Payne's 1928 plan governed the planting scheme of Sherman Circle. Therein, glossy privet hedges ran along the circle's edge, followed by a ring of American elm trees between the hedges and the outer circular walkway. A second ring of trees, this time comprised of camperdown elms, surrounded the wide circular walkway installed toward the center of the circle. Two additional rings of trees, made up of an assortment of English elms, European planetrees, red oaks, and magnolias, were situated between the camperdown elms and the American elms. Thus, four concentric circles of trees were planted within Sherman Circle. Payne also arranged the tree plantings so that the American, camperdown, and English elms formed linear rows along the lateral walkways in line with Kansas and Illinois Avenues and Crittenden Street. American hollies and flowering dogwoods were utilized as specimen trees and did not conform to either the circular or linear arrangements. Eight groups of shrubs were likewise planted at the intersections of walkways in order to punctuate and enhance the surrounding tree cover. Five colorful, decorative perennial beds occupied the 38-foot-diameter circle at the center of Sherman Circle.

Eighty-four trees were originally planted inside the circle according to Payne's 1928 plan, but only seven are still extant: two American elms, one camperdown elm, one English elm, two red oaks, and an American holly. None of the historic hedges, shrubs, or perennials has survived, and no replacements are present on the landscape. Rather, most of the current vegetation post-dates the period of significance and is the product of a landscape rehabilitation carried out by the National Park Service in the 1980s. This project retained the circle's circular and linear arrangements of trees, and each of the 73 trees currently planted inside Sherman Circle occupies a historic tree location. Because of the then-insurmountable threat of Dutch elm-disease, the NPS rehabilitation did not call for the planting of new elms. Rather, crabapples replaced the camperdown elms and Zelkovas stood in for

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the American elms, English elms, and all other trees comprising the concentric circles. However, since 2006, local non-profit Casey Trees has worked with the NPS to reintroduce new disease-tolerant American elms back into the landscape.

During the historic period, Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 contained much less vegetation than Sherman Circle. American elms were planted as street trees along the perimeters of the four small reservations and their interiors sown with grass, but they featured no additional plantings. Beginning in the late 1940s, the National Park Service installed a variety of trees within the reservations to discourage ball playing and other such unintended uses by the public. Several large oaks are mid-20th century additions, but the majority of the trees now located within Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 date to either the NPS landscape rehabilitation or subsequent efforts on the part of Casey Trees. Ash, American holly, American hornbeam, crabapple, honey locust, and Japanese pagoda tree currently occupy the reservations' historically open interiors. Additionally, none of the historic American elms planted as street trees have survived. Most have since been replaced by crabapples, sycamores, and Zelkovas, but Casey Trees has also replanted several disease-resistant American elms.

All of the current small-scale features of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape post-date the period of significance. However, the concrete curbs surrounding Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 now occupy the same locations as curbs installed during the historic period. The current perimeter curbing is squared-off and angular, as was the historic curbing. Likewise, the quarter-round curbing that surrounds Sherman Circle's center circle is not original but believed to be a recreation of the historic design. Two cast-concrete pedestal-style drinking fountains were also installed within the circle during the historic period. Both were removed by the 1980s, but the modern NPS drinking fountain presently installed within Sherman Circle took the place of one of the historic fountains. It therefore occupies a historic location but is not a historic design. All of the remaining small-scale features currently in place throughout the cultural landscape – park signs, traffic signs, street lights, utility poles, trash receptacles, concrete slabs, newspaper boxes, and a bus shelter – are modern additions with no historic significance to the cultural landscape.

Overall, the cultural landscape's spatial organization maintains the arrangement created during the historic period and is governed by three overarching principles: radial symmetry, circular geometry, and straight-line axes. Historically, each feature within the site, such as a tree or walkway segment, could be laid over an equivalent feature simply by rotating 180 degrees along the center of Sherman Circle. For the most part, this principle is still in effect today but breaks down severely when applied to the trees planted inside Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448. As originally developed by Payne, Sherman Circle was also a collection of circles within circles. Including the surrounding traffic rotary, the site entailed some 10 concentric circles formed by the site's circulation system, planting arrangement, and small-scale features. The loss of the historic perennial beds and perimeter hedges has eliminated several of these circles, but the continued presence of the radial walkways, rings of trees, and curbing ensures that the overall pattern is still discernable. Finally, the straight lines of Kansas and Illinois Avenues and 7th and Crittenden Streets have always been key components of the cultural landscape's basic design. Payne reinforced this relationship in his plan of Sherman Circle. Through the placement of its walkways, grass panels, and vegetation, he effectively carried the routes of the two avenues and Crittenden Street across the circle. Kansas and Illinois Avenues thus became

the primary axes within the landscape, with Crittenden Street forming a secondary axis across the first two. Although Payne made no provision for 7th Street within his plan, outside the circle it separated Reservations 436 and 447 and Reservations 438 and 448, thereby breaking up the cultural landscape into its five constituent properties.

In 1927, the Advisory Committee on Natural Features of the Public Parks recommended planting only low vegetation at the center of Sherman Circle so to preserve the vista southwest down Illinois Avenue toward Grant Circle. Irving Payne incorporated this view into his 1928 plan of the circle, and also organized the tree and shrub plantings to screen similar views down Kansas Avenue and Crittenden Street. All three of these important sightlines are still present today, continue to pass through the center Sherman Circle, and remain defining characteristics of the cultural landscape.

Aspects of Integrity:

THE SEVEN ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY

Location involves the place where the cultural landscape was constructed and/or where historic events occurred. The external boundaries of Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 have not changed since the close of period of significance and their internal acreages remain the same. Therefore, the siting of the cultural landscape has not been modified and it retains integrity of location.

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a cultural landscape or historic property. The 1889 Petworth plan created the boundaries of Sherman Circle and its four associated reservations and made all future development of the cultural landscape possible. Irving Payne's 1928 plan of Sherman Circle is still apparent today. The layout, pattern, and composition of the original radial concrete walkways are particularly in evidence, although the material itself has been replaced. The same is true of the sidewalks around Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448, and for the curbing present throughout the site. The circle's current planting arrangement also follows from Payne's historic plan, but the introduction of trees and shrubs into the interiors of the four smaller reservations since the close of the period significance detracts from their historically open schemes. However, street trees, which were also planted around the reservations during the historic period, are still in place around the reservations, and the offending interior vegetation can be removed. Therefore, the cultural landscape retains integrity of design.

Setting is the physical environment of a cultural landscape. The overall street intersection setting, with its linear views along Illinois and Kansas Avenues and Crittenden Street, remains. Likewise, the residential setting surrounding the Sherman Circle cultural landscape is still characterized by the brick row houses constructed by Morris Cafritz in the 1920s and 1930s. The setting within the cultural landscape itself has changed somewhat over time, particularly in terms of vegetation, but not so much as to undermine its historic integrity.

Materials are the physical elements of a particular period that were combined or deposited in a particular pattern or configuration to form the cultural landscape. Seven historic trees constitute the only surviving landscape fabric dating to the historic period. Consequently, the integrity of materials

within the Sherman Circle cultural landscape is present but extremely limited.

Workmanship includes the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during a given period. Because of the lack of historic built materials, the Sherman Circle cultural landscape lacks integrity of workmanship.

Feeling is a cultural landscape's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. Although most of the materials have changed within the cultural landscape since the close of the period of significance, the overall design and setting remains. Moreover, because the NPS continues to administer Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 as urban parkland, visitors today experience the cultural landscape in fundamentally the same way that visitors did during the historic period. Therefore, the site retains integrity of feeling.

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a cultural landscape. The Sherman Circle cultural landscape is part of the larger community planning and development effort that extended the L'Enfant plan of Washington, DC beyond the original borders of the city. It also takes its name from General William Tecumseh is no notable historic event or person directly associated with the site. Consequently, the cultural landscape does not possess integrity of association.

CONCLUSION

This CLI finds that the Sherman Circle cultural landscape retains integrity to its period of significance. Subsequent changes have altered the landscape, especially with regard to materials, but it nonetheless continues to evoke the historic significance of the property.

Aspects of Integrity:	Location
	Design
	Setting
	Materials
	Feeling

Landscape Characteristic:

Land Use

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

Through included in the 1889 Petworth plat, Sherman Circle and its four associated reservations were not created on the ground until 1923, when Kansas and Illinois Avenues and 7th, Crittenden, Buchanan, and Decatur Streets were all cut through. The circle immediately became a community focal point and the centerpiece of Morris Cafritz's "Shermanor" development. Local residents were quick to identify themselves with Sherman Circle and developed a strong attachment to the place. During the years 1927-30, they used it as a venue for neighborhood Fourth of July celebrations and Christmas festivities. But it was landscape

architect Irving W. Payne's historic 1928 design for Sherman Circle that would come to define its principal use during the period of significance: urban parkland. More specifically, the circle became a "passing-through" park, allowing pedestrians a safe and convenient place to cross the street, as well as a shaded, verdant respite. A system of radial walkways ran through the circle, allowing people to quickly come and go. Trees and shrubs were planted throughout Sherman Circle, and colorful perennial beds added as a central decorative feature, creating a pleasant atmosphere capable of being enjoyed in the short amount of time it took to walk from one end of the park to the other. Benches and other seats, which would encourage people to linger, were not installed during the historic period.

By 1928, Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 were acquired by the federal government through the cooperation of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the Commissioners of the District of Columbia. All parties shared the opinion that the four reservations should be managed as urban parkland to prevent undesirable urban development from backing onto Sherman Circle. Each reservation was planted in grass and street trees were added around the borders, but nothing else was done to improve the small parks, except for the installation of concrete sidewalks around their perimeters. With no features to attract pedestrians into their interiors, the reservations became prime examples of "passing-around" parks.

Although they were never intended as such, the area's lack of dedicated recreational facilities quickly led neighborhood children to adopt the parks as de-facto playgrounds. Baseball playing was a nuisance as early as 1928. "No ball playing" signs were installed in or around Sherman Circle on multiple occasions, as were other signs directing people to keep off the grass. However, the children ignored the warnings, defaced the signs, and occasionally tore them down. Bicycle riding and roller skating through Sherman Circle became a problem in the early 1930s.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The inappropriate public use of the parks continued after the close of the period of significance. Throughout the 1940s, children turned grassy areas into improvised baseball diamonds, making particularly heavy use of Reservation 438. A string of complaints led the National Park Service to plant trees inside the four small reservations in an attempt to make such games impossible. Within Sherman Circle, children climbed trees, broke branches, and otherwise harmed the landscape while at play. Sometime after 1936, the National Park Service also installed benches inside the circle. This decision was not only contrary to the property's historic use as a passing-through park, but also resulted in the need to regularly repair and replace the benches. The benches were removed permanently sometime in the 1960s. Late in the decade, Sherman Circle became a hangout and rallying point for local gangs. The physical condition of the cultural landscape declined severely, and the neighborhood crime rate rose.

The National Park Service conducted a multi-year rehabilitation project across the Sherman Circle Cultural landscape during the years 1985-87. This work focused on replanting trees and replacing the concrete walkways, and upon its completion the condition of the site was

markedly improved. With the landscape in better physical shape, the inappropriate public use has gradually ebbed, a process bolstered by a general turnaround in the quality of the surrounding neighborhood. In the present day, Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 are fairly typical examples of urban parkland within Washington, DC. During the day, pedestrians and dog walkers frequent the site, and activities such as Frisbee playing and picnicking are relatively common during fair weather. Because the site is far removed from the typical tourist destinations located in downtown Washington, DC, most of its visitors likely are local residents. The lack of benches appears to be limiting the number of loungers frequenting the parks, and therefore Sherman Circle may still be correctly termed a passing-through park and its associated reservations as passing-around parks.

EVALUATION

The use and purpose of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape has not changed since the period of significance. Sherman Circle and its associated reservation were established as urban parks and continue to be administered as such. The site retains integrity of land use.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Continued function of cultural landscape as urban parkland

Feature Identification Number: 149615

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



1928



From 1927-30 the Petworth Citizens' Association held daylong celebrations in and around Sherman Circle on the 4th of July. These snapshots provide a glimpse into the many patriotic scenes that took place over this four year period (Washington Star).

Topography

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

Real estate developer Morris Cafritz and the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital graded, filled, and leveled Sherman Circle in 1926, but the earliest known delineation of the circle's topography dates to 1929. By this time, the circle was relatively flat, the apparent result of the work carried out three years earlier. The change in grade over the entire circle measured 5.75 feet, from 222.48 feet above sea level in its southeast quadrant down to 216.73 feet in the northwest. There is no known topographical rendering of any of the four adjacent reservations during the historic period, but photographs of Reservations 438, 447, and 448 taken in 1928 show that these properties were also graded by this time (NCR Lands Records Files, Reservations 438, 447, and 448). They appear as flat parcels of land without any sudden rises or depressions.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The National Park Service most recently surveyed the landscape's topography in 1985, and a comparison of this data with that of 1929 reveals that the lay of Sherman Circle has not changed significantly since the historic period. The circle's outlying reservations also retain the even topography shown in historic photographs. The landscape as a whole currently slopes down from south to north, with the highest elevation (224 feet above sea level) near the southwest corner of Reservation 438 and the lowest elevation (215 feet above sea level) at the northwest corner of Reservation 447. The site also exhibits a secondary declivity moving west from the northeast corner of Reservation 436 (221 feet above sea level) and the low point of 215 feet at Reservation 447. However, in most cases the grade changes are extremely gradual, giving the appearance of relatively flat terrain within a given reservation and across the landscape as a whole.

EVALUATION

Given the absence of detailed topographic information relating to Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 during the period of significance, it is impossible to ascertain with absolute certainty the degree to which the current topography reflects historic conditions. However, it is clear that the topography of Sherman Circle has not been substantially altered, and there is no evidence to suggest that the grade of its associated reservations has changed since the close of the historic period. Rather, the relatively flat topography that underlies the entire Sherman Circle cultural landscape appears to be the result of the grading, filling, and leveling conducted in the 1920s, and therefore contributes to the site's historic integrity.

Character-defining Features:

Feature:	Relatively flat topography of the cultural landscape established in the 1920s
Feature Identification Number:	149617
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing

Circulation

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

During the historic period, the circulation system within the Sherman Circle cultural landscape consisted of two basic components: the radial arrangement of concrete pedestrian walkways inside Sherman Circle and the corresponding concrete sidewalks enclosing Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448. Landscape architect Irving W. Payne submitted his first plan for the improvement of Sherman Circle in January of 1926. It called for a radiating system of pedestrian walkways that divided the reservation into a smaller central circle surrounded by 12 alternating grass panels (six wedge-shaped and six rectilinear). According to the plan, a 12-foot-wide perimeter sidewalk was to comprise the outer edge of Sherman Circle, while a much wider paved area ringed the smaller circle at its center. Twelve lateral crosswalks also were designed to connect the two circular routes and then meet the traffic rotary. Grass panels filled in the resultant open spaces between the various walkways. Payne arranged these lateral walks to line up with the edges of Crittenden Street and Kansas and Illinois Avenues, thereby visually linking Sherman Circle with its surrounding environment.

Per convention, the District of Columbia was to assume ownership of the proposed perimeter sidewalk around Sherman Circle. However, the DC board of commissioners refused to accept the land, and Payne's landscape plan consequently was rendered impracticable. He returned in May of 1928 with a new design that addressed this problem. In order to remove the need for a land transfer, Payne moved the perimeter sidewalk 28.5 feet into the interior of the circle. The wide paved area around the central circle remained unchanged, but Payne's new plan decreased the number of lateral connecting walkways from 12 to 10. Those in line with the edges of Illinois and Kansas Avenues occupied the same locations as in the earlier plan, but single walks were now placed along the centerline of Crittenden Street. The modifications to Sherman Circle's circulation system also rearranged the grass panels and increased their number from 12 to 20. The Office of Public Buildings and Grounds approved Payne's new plan, and workers were busy installing Sherman Circle's concrete walkways by the spring of 1929.

Although they served as functional components of the landscape, these walkways were more than simple utilitarian features. Payne added a decorative element to the design by utilizing square concrete slabs of various sizes to collectively form each of the walks. The outer circular walk, which measured 10 feet wide, encompassed four rows of squares, each of which measured 2.5 feet per side. He also employed this composition for the walks located along the centerline of Crittenden Street and two short spurs leading to the drinking fountains. The rest of the lateral walkways were each eight feet wide with four rows of two-foot squares. The wide ring around the central circle was 20 feet wide and encompassed ten rows of squares. On average, each of these squares was two feet wide, but in order to facilitate the sharpness of the curve those in the inner rows were slightly smaller and those in the outer rows slightly larger. In total, some 5,000 individual squares were used to construct Sherman Circle's radial system of concrete walkways, along with numerous partial squares installed at the intersections of the individual walks.

The concrete sidewalks around Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 likely were installed around this time. They appear in Payne's original 1926 plan of Sherman Circle, but historic photographs show that they had not yet been installed by August of 1928. In all likelihood, they were added in 1929, concurrent with the work inside the circle or shortly thereafter. The sidewalks appear in the 1932 plan of the proposed route of the 48-inch diameter water main through Sherman Circle. This plan captures existing conditions with an incredibly high degree of detail. Consequently, they are presumed to have been present at this time. According to the plan, each of the sidewalks measured 6.5 feet in width. Those along Kansas and Illinois Avenues continued in line with the lateral walkways extending through Sherman Circle.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The radial system of concrete walkways within Sherman Circle is still present today, and the current configuration is nearly identical to that of 1929. All of the lateral walkways have been made handicapped accessible where they meet the Sherman Circle traffic rotary, but this change does not significantly detract from their historic character. There is also a minor discrepancy to the immediate south of the drinking fountain, where a short, historically-curved

segment has since been straightened. This alteration is essentially negligible and not readily apparent on the ground. By 1984, the circle's original concrete walks had deteriorated to the point that they were unsalvageable. Consequently, the NPS replaced them in kind according to Payne's 1928 plan.

Concrete sidewalks are still present around Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448, and have been made handicapped accessible at the corners. The sidewalks measure 6.5 feet across, the same width indicated in historic plans, and each is comprised of two rows of square concrete slabs measuring approximately 3.25 feet on a side. This arrangement is not typical of DC sidewalks, and apparently derives from the design of the walkways within Sherman Circle. However, it is not known if the sidewalks appeared this way during the historic period, and additional research beyond the scope of this CLI will be required to answer this question. Given their good condition, it is almost certain that each of the sidewalks has been replaced at least once since the close of the period of significance. Although located within National Park Service reservations, the sidewalks are under the jurisdiction of the DC Department of Transportation.

EVALUATION

The radial system of concrete walkways within Sherman Circle and the sidewalks around its four associated reservations date to the period of significance and contribute to the historic character of the cultural landscape. Since the original concrete has been replaced, these features lack integrity of material, but retain integrity of location, design, setting, and feeling.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Radial concrete sidewalks within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149619

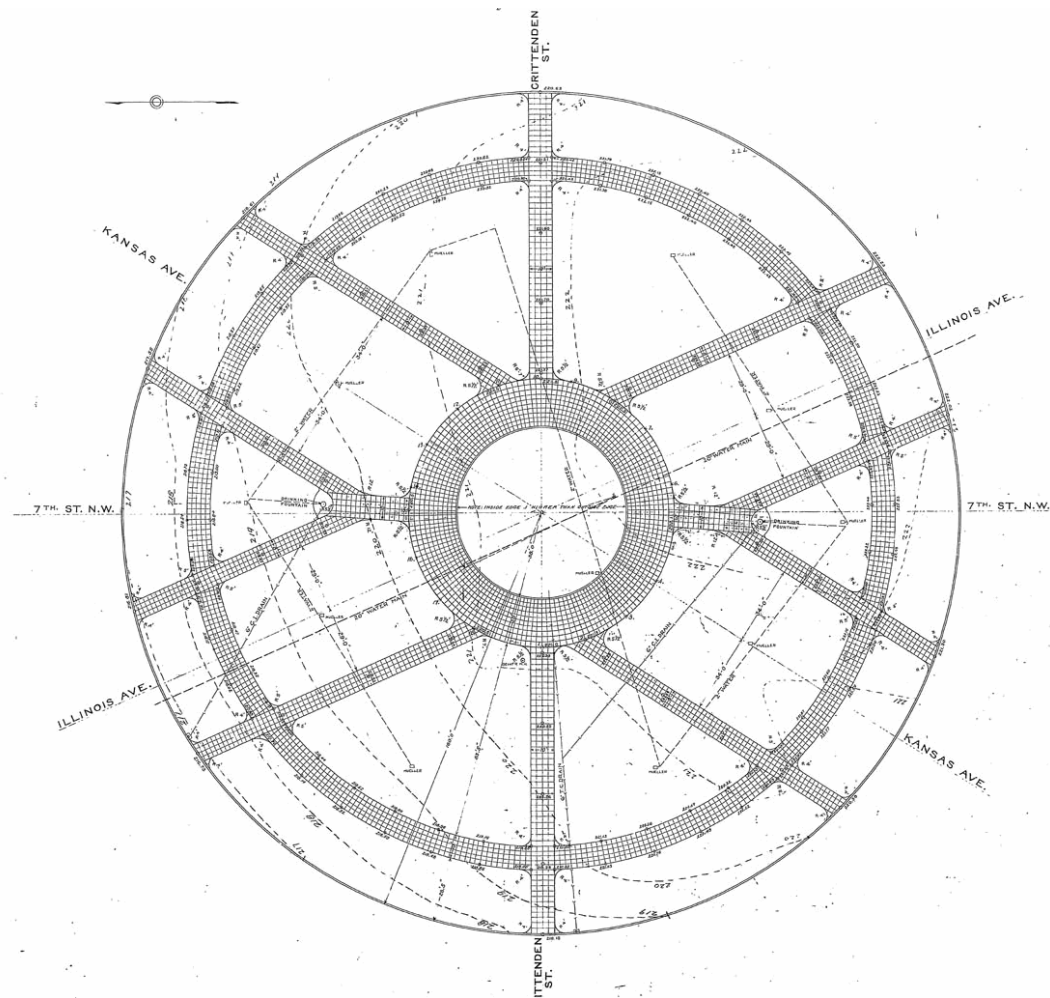
Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Concrete sidewalks around Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448

Feature Identification Number: 149621

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Historic 1929 jointing plan showing the arrangement and composition of radial concrete walks within Sherman Circle (DSC TIC 845_80013).



Present circulation system: A portion of the 20-foot wide circular concrete walkway around the center of Sherman Circle (left) and a typical segment of concrete sidewalk around the perimeters of Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 (NCR CLP 2011).

Vegetation

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

The vegetative history of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape begins in 1926-27, when the circle was sown with grass seed for the first time. Turf remained in place throughout the remainder of the historic period. Irving Payne's unexecuted landscape plan of 1926 – the earliest comprehensive proposal for planting Sherman Circle – called for the installation of 70 trees and 830 shrubs. Although the plan was never realized, Payne incorporated two key elements from it into his successful 1928 redesign of the circle: the proliferation of elms within the landscape and the careful placement of vegetation so as to reinforce the axial views down Kansas and Illinois Avenues and Crittenden Street.

As implemented, the 1928 plan included 84 trees and 822 shrubs. Payne distributed American elms along the perimeter of Sherman Circle, and used English elms and camperdown elms to line the lateral walks extending along the edges of Kansas and Illinois Avenues and down the center of Crittenden Street. This tree placement effectively screened the views down these sightlines. As the camperdown elms were all planted toward the center of the circle, they also formed a second ring of trees that complemented the American elms along the site's edge. Payne populated the rest of the circle with additional English and camperdown elms, European planetrees, magnolias, American hollies, and dogwoods. Most of these trees were also arranged into two additional concentric rings. Fourteen different types of shrubs, including five varieties of lilac, were grouped into clusters and planted at eight of the walkway intersections. Low hedges of glossy privet helped define the circle's perimeter along the traffic rotary. A full list of the trees and shrubs planted within Sherman Circle according to Payne's 1928 plan is as follows:

Trees:

Sherman Circle

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American elm (*Ulmus americana*) – 24
English elm (*Ulmus campestris*) – 24
Camperdown elm (*Ulmus glabra camperdowni*) – 12
European planetree (*Platanus orientalis*) – 2
Red oak (*Quercus rubra*) – 3
Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) – 3
Sweet bay magnolia (*Magnolia glauca*) – 6
American holly (*Ilex opaca*) – 4
White flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) – 6

Shrubs:

Common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris* var. *Marie Le Graye*) – 8
Common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris* var. *Charles the Tenth*) – 17
Common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris* var. *Mme. Lemoine*) – 9
Common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris* var. *Rubra De Marly*) – 3
Hungarian lilac (*Syringa josikea*) – 23
Crimson weigela (*Weigela floribunda*) – 5
Border goldenbell (*Forsythia intermedia*) – 17
Red rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*) – 5
Large flowering mockorange (*Philadelphus grandiflora*) – 8
Flowering quince (*Cudonia japonica*) – 9
Vanhoutte spirea (*Spiraea van houttei*) – 16
Bridalwreath (*Spiraea prunifolia*) – 16
Gordon currant (*Ribes gordoniana*) – 9
Showy border goldenbell (*Forsythia spectabilis*) – 7
Glossy privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*) – 670

In addition to Sherman Circle's tree and shrub plantings, Payne also developed a formal arrangement of five decorative perennial beds that occupied the site's open central circle. The largest of these beds was circular and surrounded by four curved beds separated by grass walks. A total of 1,919 individual specimens were planted across the five beds, with the following species composition:

Pfitzer juniper (*Juniperus ch. pfitzeriana*) – 45
True dwarf boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa') – 860
Balloon flower (*Platycodon grandiflorum*) – 20
White balloon flower (*Platycodon grandiflorum* 'Album') – 20
Gasplant (*Dictamnus albus*) – 50
Purple gasplant (*Dictamnus albus* 'Ruber') – 50
Gold flower (*Hypericum moserianum*) – 20
Lemon daylily (*Hemerocallis flava*) – 24
Japanese daylily (*Hemerocallis thunbergii*) – 16
Goatsbeard astilbe (*Astilbe astilboides*) – 30
Rhineland astilbe (*Astilbe* 'Rheinland') – 50
Washington lupine (*Lupinus polyphyllus*) – 50

White lupine (*Lupinus albus*) – 30
Virginia false-dragonhead (*Physostegia virginiana*) -50
Blue wild-indigo (*Baptisa australis*) – 12
Clump speedwell (*Veronica longifolia* var. *subsessilis*) – 50
Shasta daisy (*Chrysanthemum maximum*) – 20
Painted lady (*Chrysanthemum coccineum*) – 18
Big coreopsis (*Coreopsis grandiflora*) – 50
Common perennial gaillardia (*Gaillardia aristata*) – 50
Caucasian scabiosa (*Scabiosa caucasica*) – 28
Mountain-bluet (*Centaurea montana*) – 46
Stokes' aster (*Stokesia laevis*) – 40
Carpathian bellflower (*Campanula carpatica*) – 60
Wintercreeper (*Euonymus radicans*) – 150
Glassy abelia (*Abelia floribunda*) – 20
Pieris japonica – 30
Azalea indica 'Alba' – 15
Azalea amoena – 15

Added to the trees and shrubs, the perennials brought the final tally for all plants inside Sherman Circle to 2,825. As far as is known, all specimens were present at the close of the period of significance in 1936.

In contrast, Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 featured only street trees and grass lawns during the historic period. Historic photographs show that the trees were American elms, and that they and the turf were in place by August of 1928. Payne included suggested locations and spacing for the street trees around these reservations in both his 1926 and 1928 plans for Sherman Circle, but the positions of the trees in the photographs indicate that his recommendations were not followed. Judging by the photos, it appears that nine elms were each planted around Reservations 447 and 448. Most likely, 10-12 elms were planted around the larger Reservations 436 and 438.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The vegetation within the Sherman Circle cultural landscape has undergone severe change since the close of the period of significance. The majority of Sherman Circle is still turf, as it was historically, but there are now no shrubs or perennial beds. Instead, the central circle is planted in grass. Moreover, only seven of Sherman Circle's original 84 trees are still extant: two American elms, one camperdown elm, one English elm, two red oaks, and an American holly. Other than these survivors, most of the trees planted within the circle are from a landscape rehabilitation carried out by the National Park Service (NPS) during 1985-87. This was not a one-for-one tree replacement program, and currently only 73 trees are located within the circle. However, each of these trees occupies a location specified by Irving Payne in his 1928 plan. The four concentric circles of trees planted during the historic period are still present on the landscape, as are the lateral rows that continue to funnel views down Kansas and Illinois Avenues and Crittenden Street. However, Dutch elm disease-tolerant cultivars

were not yet widely available in the mid-1980s, so planting new elm trees during the rehabilitation project was not a viable option. Faced with this reality, the NPS utilized Zelkova, a tree that mimics the familiar elm shape but is immune to Dutch elm disease, as a replacement tree for the American elms and English elms. Zelkovas also stood in for lost planetrees, oaks, magnolias, hollies, and dogwoods during the replanting, creating more of a monoculture within the circle than had existed historically. Effectively reproducing the characteristic low, drooping habit of Sherman Circle's historic camperdown elms posed a unique challenge, and the NPS ultimately settled on the use of crabapple trees as replacements. This was a necessarily imperfect solution, but the crabapples were at least appropriately scaled and possessed a somewhat similar leaf structure to that of the camperdown elm.

On April 17, 2010, local non-profit Casey Trees partnered with the National Park Service to host a community event at Sherman Circle. Volunteers planted 12 trees that day: three crabapples, eight disease-tolerant American elms, and a London planetree. Two of the new crabapples were in-kind replacements. The third was planted just south of the drinking fountain in a spot that had been vacant for many years but had held a holly tree during the historic period. Seven of the new American elms replaced Zelkovas around the perimeter of the circle and once again occupy locations that Irving Payne specified in 1928 for American elms. The eighth is located along the Crittenden Street axis where an English elm originally had been planted. The London planetree now occupies the former location of a historic European planetree.

The present state of vegetation within Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 is a far cry from the simple arrangement of open grass panels edged with street trees that existed during the historic period. The turf remains, but the reservations have since been filled in with a wide variety of trees. Most of the current specimens were either planted by the NPS in 1987 or Casey Trees in 2010. However, trees were first planted within the interiors of the reservations in 1949, and several of the current specimens – most notably the large oaks inside Reservations 438 and 448 – appear to date to the mid-20th century.

None of the historic American elms originally planted as street trees around the four reservations are still in place today. Most have been replaced with Zelkovas, maples, or sycamores, but since 2004 Casey Trees has reintroduced six disease-tolerant American elms. The current street trees are planted in or near the locations occupied by their predecessors during the period of significance. All of the street trees within the cultural landscape are situated on property that is under the jurisdiction of the DC Department of Transportation. However, several historic street tree locations are currently vacant, predominantly along Buchanan Street.

The following list of trees within the Sherman Circle cultural landscape was compiled in 2011 and is based upon field identification, NPS plans, and information obtained from the Casey Trees website:

Sherman Circle:

Sherman Circle

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American elm (*Ulmus americana*) – 10 (two historic, seven replacement in kind, one replacement of historic English elm)
English elm (*Ulmus campestris*) – 1 (historic)
Camperdown elm (*Ulmus glabra camperdowni*) – 1 (historic)
Red oak (*Quercus rubra*) – 2 (historic)
American holly (*Ilex opaca*) – 1 (historic)
London planetree (*Platanus x acerifolia*) – 1
Crabapple (*Malus* ‘Sugar Tyme’) – 13
Zelkova serrata (*Zelkova serrata* ‘Village Green’) – 44

Reservation 436:

Ash (*Fraxinus* sp.) – 1
Oak (*Quercus* sp.) – 2
Japanese pagoda tree (*Saphora japonica*) – 6
Crabapple (*Malus* ‘Sugar Tyme’) – 9
American holly (*Ilex opaca*) – 1
American elm (*Ulmus americana*) – 1 (street tree)
American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) – 1 (street tree)
Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) – 1 (street tree)
Zelkova serrata (*Zelkova serrata*) – 6 (street trees)

Reservation 438:

Oak (*Quercus* sp.) – 4
Japanese pagoda tree (*Saphora japonica*) – 1
Crabapple (*Malus* ‘Sugar Tyme’) – 9
American elm (*Ulmus americana*) – 3 (street trees)
Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) – 2 (street trees)
Zelkova serrata (*Zelkova serrata*) – 2 (street trees)

Reservation 447:

Japanese pagoda tree (*Saphora japonica*) – 2
Crabapple (*Malus* ‘Sugar Tyme’) – 6
American holly (*Ilex opaca*) – 1
American hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*) – 1
Honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) – 1
American elm (*Ulmus americana*) – 2 (street trees)
American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) – 1 (street tree)
Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) – 1 (street tree)
Zelkova serrata (*Zelkova serrata*) – 4 (street trees)

Reservation 448:

Oak (*Quercus* sp.) – 3
Crabapple (*Malus* ‘Sugar Tyme’) – 9
Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) – 4 (street trees)
Zelkova serrata (*Zelkova serrata*) – 2 (street trees)

EVALUATION

The integrity of the vegetation within the Sherman Circle cultural landscape has been compromised by the loss of historic plant materials and the installation of discordant new materials since the close of the period of significance. Nonetheless, Sherman Circle's grass panels and its four associated reservations remain covered with turf, and the seven surviving historic trees provide a tangible link to the past. The general character of Sherman Circle's historic planting design remains intact, most importantly the circular arrangements of trees and the linear rows framing the principal sightlines. Overall, 73 of the 84 tree locations specified in Payne's 1928 plan are currently planted with trees, and this continuity greatly contributes to the integrity of the cultural landscape. Likewise, the continued presence of street trees around Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 bolsters the site's historic character. The reintroduction of disease-tolerant American elms back into the landscape is a positive change that should be continued in the future, both within the circle and as street trees around the reservations. Where they are planted in locations also occupied by American elms during the historic period, the new trees should be considered as contributing landscape features; this CLI recognizes them as such. The Zelkovas are classified as non-contributing but compatible features because they were planted in lieu of new elms before the advent of such disease-tolerant varieties. Replanting Sherman Circle's historic perennial beds and the removal of all non-street trees from Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 would further improve the historic integrity of the cultural landscape.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Turf throughout Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448

Feature Identification Number: 149623

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: General retention of the 1928 planting plan of Sherman Circle by means of the 73 historic tree locations that are currently planted with trees. (Individual trees are contributing if they are original and date to the period of significance or have been rep

Feature Identification Number: 149625

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Two historic American elm trees within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149627

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Historic camperdown elm tree within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149629

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Sherman Circle

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Feature: Historic English elm tree within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149631

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Two historic red oak trees within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149633

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Historic American holly tree within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149635

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Seven disease-tolerant American elms planted within Sherman Circle in locations occupied by American elms during the historic period

Feature Identification Number: 149637

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: One disease-tolerant American elm planted within Sherman Circle in location occupied by an English elm during the historic period

Feature Identification Number: 149639

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: London planetree within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149655

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Thirteen crabapple trees within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149657

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Forty-four Zelkova trees within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149659

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Presence of street trees around Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448. (Individually, only the disease-tolerant American elms are contributing features because only American elms were present during the historic period. See below.)

Sherman Circle

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Feature Identification Number: 149661

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Six disease-tolerant American elms planted as street trees around Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448

Feature Identification Number: 149663

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: All other street trees around Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448

Feature Identification Number: 149665

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

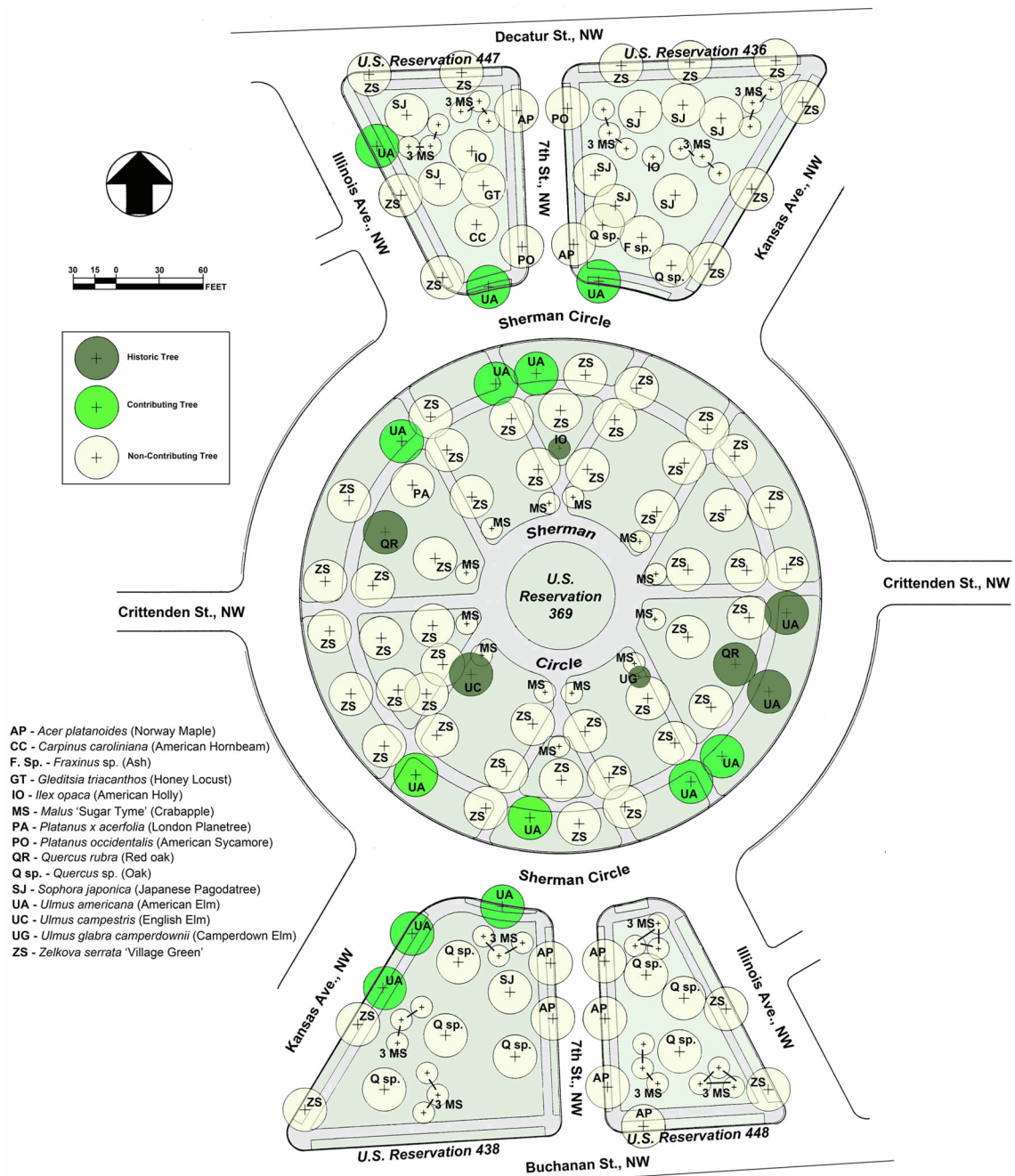
Feature: Trees planted within the interiors of Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448

Feature Identification Number: 149667

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

Sherman Circle
Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations



2011 existing conditions planting plan for the Sherman Circle cultural landscape (NCR CLP 2011 from DSC TIC 845_80026).



Two contributing trees within the cultural landscape: a historic red oak on the west side of Sherman Circle (left) and a disease-tolerant American elm sapling planted as a street tree on the south side of Reservation 447 (right) (NCR CLP 2011).

Small Scale Features

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

Several small-scale features were installed within the Sherman Circle cultural landscape during the period of significance. Two types of concrete curbing were utilized. The first was squared-off and angular, the type used to line streets and sidewalks throughout Washington, DC. As such, it formed the boundaries of Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448. The second type was quarter-round, and ringed Sherman Circle's central circle. Two cast-concrete drinking fountains were also installed within Sherman Circle during the historic period. Both were of the Art Deco type installed throughout the National Capital Parks during the 1930s and featured tiered, tapered, unornamented octagonal cylinders. A single wooden bench, probably used as a bus stop, was located at the edge of Reservation 447. After neighborhood children started using the parks as playgrounds in the late 1920s, signs directing people to keep off the grass and prohibiting ball playing were installed at various locations within and around the landscape.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Of the small-scale features installed during the historic period, only the curbing remains in place today. Both types still occupy their respective locations, but are not composed of original materials. Their condition is very good, meaning the concrete must have been

replaced at least once since the close of the period of significance. Both of the historic drinking fountains have been removed, although the fountain on the south side of Sherman Circle has been replaced by a modern NPS drinking fountain. The corresponding position to the north is currently empty, although a plastic trash receptacle is located nearby. Another such receptacle is located near the current drinking fountain and is installed atop a poured concrete slab. A metal and glass city bus shelter is installed on top of another concrete slab near the northeast corner of Reservation 436. A metal trash receptacle and two metal newspaper boxes are located near the bus shelter, along with a sign providing information on bus routes and schedules. NPS signs within Sherman Circle announce that the park is closed at night and instruct visitors to keep their pets leashed and to clean up after them. Additional NPS signs inside Reservations 436 and 447 are labeled “Rock Creek Park Watch” and provide telephone numbers for obtaining park information and contacting the U.S. Park Police. Traffic signs, utility poles, and city street lights are located around Sherman Circle and its four associated reservations

EVALUATION

As the only surviving historic small-scale features, the square and quarter-round curbs contribute to the historic character of the cultural landscape. Since the original concrete has been replaced, these features lack integrity of material, but retain integrity of location, design, setting, and feeling.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Perimeter curbing around Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448

Feature Identification Number: 149669

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Curbing around interior circle at the center of Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149671

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Drinking fountain

Feature Identification Number: 149673

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Trash receptacles and associated concrete slab

Feature Identification Number: 149675

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Park signs

Feature Identification Number: 149677

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Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Traffic signs

Feature Identification Number: 149679

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: City street lights

Feature Identification Number: 149681

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Utility poles

Feature Identification Number: 149683

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Bus shelter and associated concrete slab

Feature Identification Number: 149685

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Newspaper boxes

Feature Identification Number: 149687

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Top: A dog drinks from one of Sherman Circle's historic drinking fountains in this July 15, 1978 photo by Joel Richardson (Washington Post). Bottom: The modern NPS drinking fountain currently installed inside the circle (NCR CLP 2011).



The two types of curbs within the cultural landscape: The quarter-round curbing ringing Sherman Circle's central circle (top) and the square curbing around the perimeters of Sherman Circle and its four associated reservations (bottom) (NCR CLP 2011).



The two types of National Park Service signs installed within the cultural landscape. Left: Inside Sherman Circle. Right: Inside Reservations 436 and 447 (NCR CLP 2011).



City bus shelter, sign, newspaper boxes, and metal trash can near the northeast corner of Reservation 436 (NCR CLP 2011).

Spatial Organization

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

Three key concepts have always defined the spatial organization of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape: symmetry, circles, and straight lines. At first glance, the site appears to exhibit bilateral symmetry, but a closer analysis reveals that there is no single axis along which it can be cut so as to create two equal halves. Rather, the cultural landscape is governed by rotational symmetry. This can be demonstrated by comparing two copies of Irving Payne's 1928 landscape plan: one right side-up and the other upside-down. Ignoring names and numbers, both copies are identical. This is because any fixed point or distinct area within the historic design can be matched with a copy of itself simply by rotating 180 degrees along the center of Sherman Circle. Doing so reveals that Reservations 436 and 438 coincide with one another, as do Reservations 447 and 448. Each of Sherman Circle's 20 grass panels is likewise paired with an identical twin across from it, as are the walkways. During the historic period this was also true of the locations of the drinking fountains, central perennial beds, clumps of shrubbery, and trees, although the species were not always the same on both sides of the circle. Even the surrounding system of city roads displays rotational symmetry. Crittenden and 7th Streets and Kansas and Illinois Avenues are reflected back upon themselves, and so is the circle's traffic rotary. Buchanan Street and Decatur Street are mirror images of each other.

Circles, not surprisingly, are the second major theme underlying the spatial organization of this cultural landscape. Payne developed Sherman Circle as a collection of circles within circles. The park itself is a circle, and he placed a large circular perennial bed at its center. Moving outward from here, the center bed was surrounded by a circular grass walk, the quarter-round curbing, and then four additional perennial beds that were also arranged to form a circle. Next came the 20-foot wide circular walkway and a ring of camperdown elms, followed by two additional rings comprised of a variety of trees, then the 10-foot wide circular walkway, and finally the ring of American elms. Although they did not form a complete circle, glossy privet hedges were planted in arcs along the perimeter of the traffic circle. The outer curb lay beyond the hedges and then came the rotary itself.

Four important straight lines extended through all of these circles and met at the very center of the landscape: the centerlines of 7th Street, Crittenden Street, Kansas Avenue, and Illinois Avenue. Measuring 50 feet across, Kansas Avenue was the widest of the roads, followed by Illinois Avenue at 40 feet, and then 7th Street and Crittenden Streets at 30 feet each. Payne's 1928 plan carried Kansas and Illinois Avenues through Sherman Circle in the form of large rectangular grass panels, 50 feet wide for the former and 40 for the latter, flanked by 8-foot wide concrete walkways. Because they were the largest and most pronounced, the routes of the avenues became the two principal cross axes within the cultural landscape. Crittenden Street was extended through the circle in the form of a 10-foot-wide walkway, creating a secondary axis through the landscape. The linear rows of elms planted within the circle helped funnel views down all three of these sightlines. Despite the fact that the centerline of 7th Street also projected through the center of Sherman Circle, Payne made no provision for it in his plan. On the contrary, his tree placement actually prevented views along the 7th Street corridor. However, outside of Sherman Circle, 7th Street separated Reservations 436 and 447 and Reservations 438 and 448, thereby dividing the cultural landscape into its five component

properties.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The three key concepts governing the spatial organization of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape remain in effect today. Most features within the site still exhibit radial symmetry, but changes to the historic vegetation and the removal of one of the drinking fountains have slightly diminished the quality of this characteristic. Sherman Circle also remains a set of circles within circles, but the loss of the historic perennial beds and privet hedges has removed several of these internal circles from the landscape. The site's two principal axes still are defined by Kansas and Illinois Avenues, with the line of Crittenden Street as the secondary axis. Linear rows of trees within Sherman Circle continue to focus views down these sightlines, although the species composition of the trees has changed. Seventh Street remains the dividing line between the reservations to the north and south of the circle.

EVALUATION

The spatial organization of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape has integrity and contributes to the historic character of the site.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Rotational symmetry of the cultural landscape

Feature Identification Number: 149689

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Concentric circles within Sherman Circle (trees, walkways, and curbing)

Feature Identification Number: 149691

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Primary axes along Kansas and Illinois Avenues; reinforced by grass panels, lateral crosswalks, and linear rows of trees within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149693

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Secondary axes along the centerline of Crittenden Street; reinforced by lateral crosswalks and linear rows of trees within Sherman Circle

Feature Identification Number: 149695

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

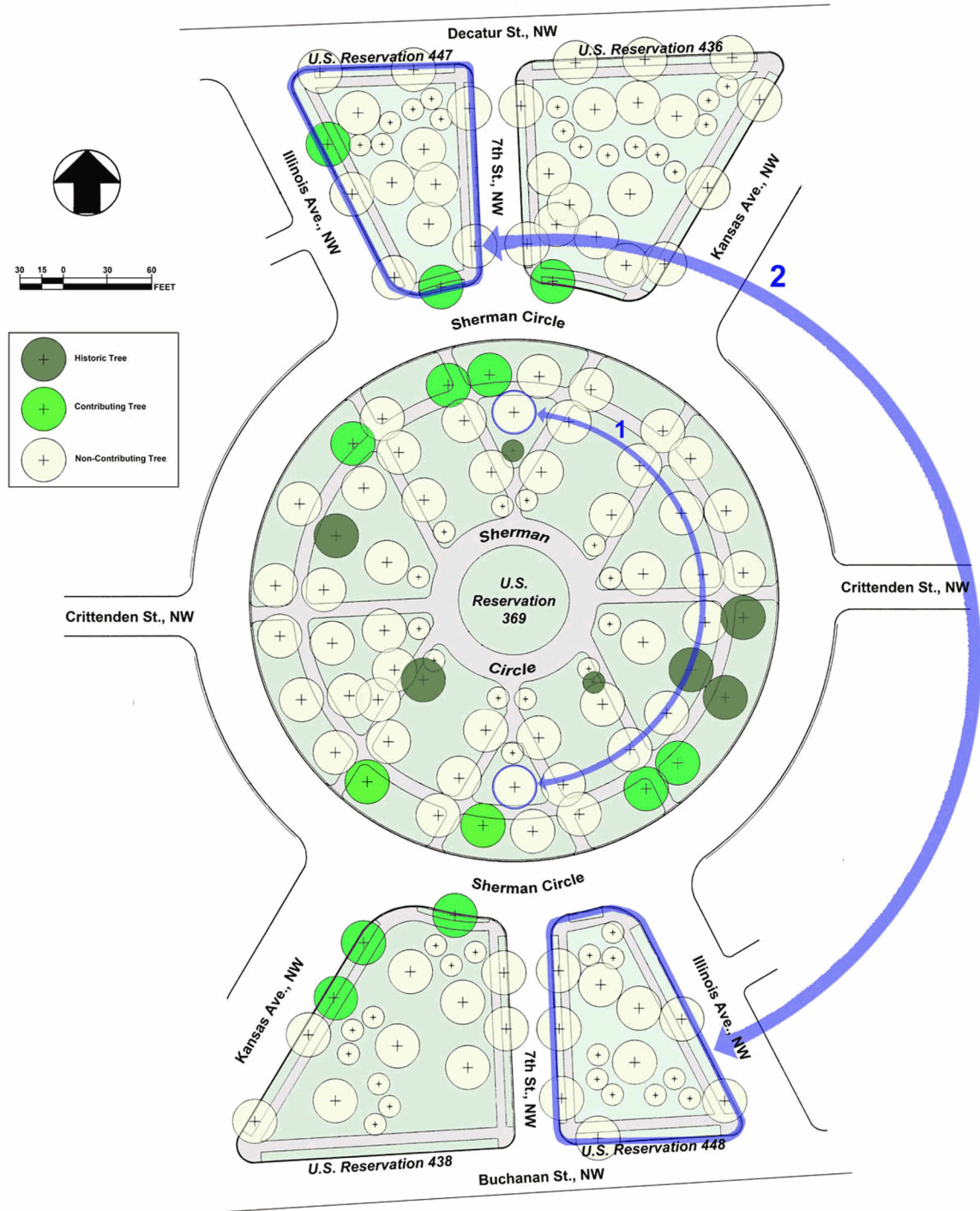
Feature: Separation of Reservations 436 & 447 and Reservations 438 and 448 by 7th Street

Feature Identification Number: 149697

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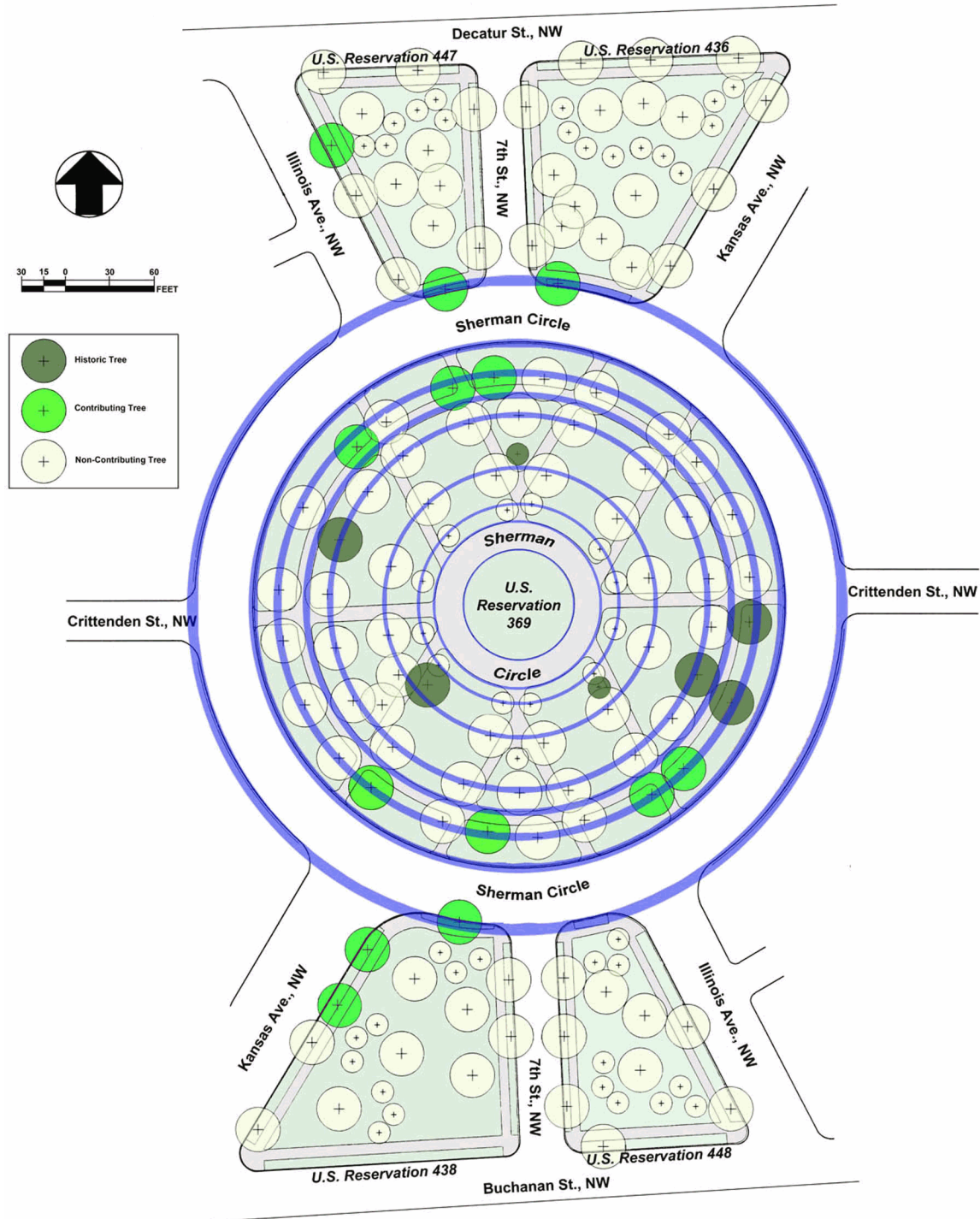
Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Sherman Circle
Rock Creek Park - DC Street Plan Reservations

Two examples of the many instances of rotational symmetry within the cultural landscape: 1) Corresponding tree positions within Sherman Circle and 2) The reciprocal shapes of Reservations 447 and 448 (NCR CLP 2011 from DSC TIC 845_80026).



Sherman Circle is actually a grouping of circles within circles, formed by the arrangement of trees, walks, curbs, and the surrounding traffic rotary (NCR CLP 2011 from DSC TIC 845_80026).

Views and Vistas

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

In 1927, the Advisory Committee on Natural Features of the Public Parks recommended planting only low vegetation at the center of Sherman Circle to preserve the vista southeast down Illinois Avenue toward Grant Circle. Irving Payne incorporated this view into his 1928 plan, and also continued the view northwest through Sherman Circle. He did the same for Kansas Avenue, providing views to the northeast and southeast through the circle, and along the centerline of Crittenden Street, which bisects the circle running east-west. As the site's principal cross axes, the routes of Kansas and Illinois Avenues were also the principal sightlines, with that along Crittenden Street functioning as a secondary vista. Although the historical focus seems to have been on the views originating from the center of Sherman Circle, the circle itself was equally visible along these sightlines. Within Sherman Circle, Payne utilized rows of elms and lateral walkways to funnel vision through these routes, and also incorporated wide grass panels in the cases of Kansas and Illinois Avenues. Outside the circle, the views were screened primarily by Morris Cafritz's ubiquitous Petworth row houses, which also continued beyond the boundaries of the cultural landscape.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

All six of the cultural landscape's historic views remain in place. As defined from the center of Sherman Circle, they are: 1) northeast along Kansas Avenue, 2) southwest along Kansas Avenue, 3) northwest along Illinois Avenue, 4) southeast along Illinois Avenue, 5) east along Crittenden Street, and 6) west along Crittenden Street. As in the historic period, reciprocal views back toward Sherman Circle function equally well along each of these sightlines. Within Sherman Circle, grass panels, lateral walkways, and rows of trees continue to reinforce the views, although the elms are now far outnumbered by crabapples and Zelkovas. The Cafritz row houses remain the most common structures screening these views in the immediate vicinity of the cultural landscape.

EVALUATION

Both the inward and outward-looking views to and from the Sherman Circle cultural landscape retain integrity and therefore contribute to the site's historic character. The continued presence of the grass panels, lateral walkways, and rows of trees within the circle, as well as the Petworth row houses outside the circle, ensures that both the quality and condition of these views fundamentally are the same as during the period of significance. Should plantings be reintroduced to the center of Sherman Circle, it is vital that the advisory committee's original recommendation be followed, and only low lying vegetation used so as prevent the obstruction of the historic sightlines.

Character-defining Features:

Sherman Circle

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Feature: View northeast along Kansas Avenue from the center of Sherman Circle, and reciprocal view back toward the circle

Feature Identification Number: 149699

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: View southwest along Kansas Avenue from the center of Sherman Circle, and reciprocal view back toward the circle

Feature Identification Number: 149701

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: View northwest along Illinois Avenue from the center of Sherman Circle, and reciprocal view back toward the circle

Feature Identification Number: 149703

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: View southeast along Illinois Avenue from the center of Sherman Circle, and reciprocal view back toward the circle

Feature Identification Number: 149705

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: View east along Crittenden Street from the center of Sherman Circle, and reciprocal view back toward the circle

Feature Identification Number: 149707

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: View west along Crittenden Street from the center of Sherman Circle, and reciprocal view back toward the circle

Feature Identification Number: 149709

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



One of the cultural landscape's six contributing sightlines: The view through the center of Sherman Circle southeast down Illinois Avenue (top) and the reciprocal view northwest along Illinois Avenue back toward the circle (bottom) (NCR CLP 2011).

Condition

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Good

Assessment Date: 08/29/2011

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

The Condition Assessment Date refers to the date that the park superintendent concurred with the findings of this CLI.

The Sherman Circle cultural landscape retains integrity to its periods of significance, 1889 and 1923-36, and is in overall “good” condition. (This indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit’s cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.) Although no immediate corrective action is needed at this time, the following impacts should be addressed in order to ensure that the cultural landscape remains in “good” condition.

Impacts

Type of Impact:	Visitation
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	The public use of Sherman Circle and Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 as a leisure parks should continue to be encouraged, but increased visitation will necessarily require more routine maintenance on the part of the National Park Service. During the historic period, the turf was quickly worn out where pedestrians routinely deviated from the concrete walkways and sidewalks. As yet, the landscape does not present any such problem areas, but such conditions would not be expected if visitation increases. Care should be taken to monitor the on-site conditions and implement corrective maintenance when warranted.
Type of Impact:	Vegetation/Invasive Plants
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	The trees planted within the Sherman Circle cultural landscape appear in general to be in good health. All young trees are appropriately enclosed in gator bags so as to slowly deliver water directly to their root systems over an extended period of time. However, the majority of the crabapples (approximately

75%) are in noticeably poor condition. Three (one in Reservation 447 and two in Sherman Circle) are leafless and appear dead. A natural resource specialist should examine the trees and determine whether or not they can be saved.

Type of Impact: Removal/Replacement

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description: Several locations along the perimeters of Reservations 436, 438, 447, and 448 that were historically planted with street trees are now vacant, most noticeably along Buchanan Street. Disease-tolerant American elms should be planted to fill in these gaps, since that species was used historically. As all street trees within the reservations occupy lands under the jurisdiction of the DC Department of Transportation, the District of Columbia will need to be consulted and, ideally, assist in this replanting.

Type of Impact: Impending Development

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description: On January 31, 2011, a project entitled “Lighting at Sherman Circle” was entered into the National Park Service’s Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) database. This project is currently unfunded but includes a projected target start date of January 2, 2011. It proposes the installation of 20, 12-foot tall “Washington” style lampposts and luminaries at the walkway entrances around the perimeter of the circle. This style was selected so as to match the preexisting Washington lampposts and luminaries installed within Grant Circle, which is located three blocks to the southeast. Additional Washington style lampposts and luminaries also serve as street lights in the immediate vicinity of the Sherman Circle cultural landscape.

Although no lighting of any kind has ever been installed within Sherman Circle, the Washington style lampposts and luminaires are historic designs that coincide with the cultural landscape’s period of significance, and they will help to visually link the site with its surroundings. Consequently, the proper installation of these features should pose little to no impact upon the landscape’s character and historic integrity. However, at present the project description states only that “work will consist of excavation, trenching, directional boring under existing walkways, installation of conduit, junction boxes, concrete footers, wiring and restoration of existing grade and disturbed turf.” The placement and installation of the lampposts and luminaires should also be executed so as to eliminate or

minimize any potentially detrimental effects to all contributing landscape characteristics identified in this CLI. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to, the preservation of historic trees, the preservation or replacement of other contributing trees, the retention of Sherman Circle's historic planting plan, and the maintenance of unobstructed views up and down the cultural landscape's principal sightlines.

Treatment

Treatment

Approved Treatment: Undetermined

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